

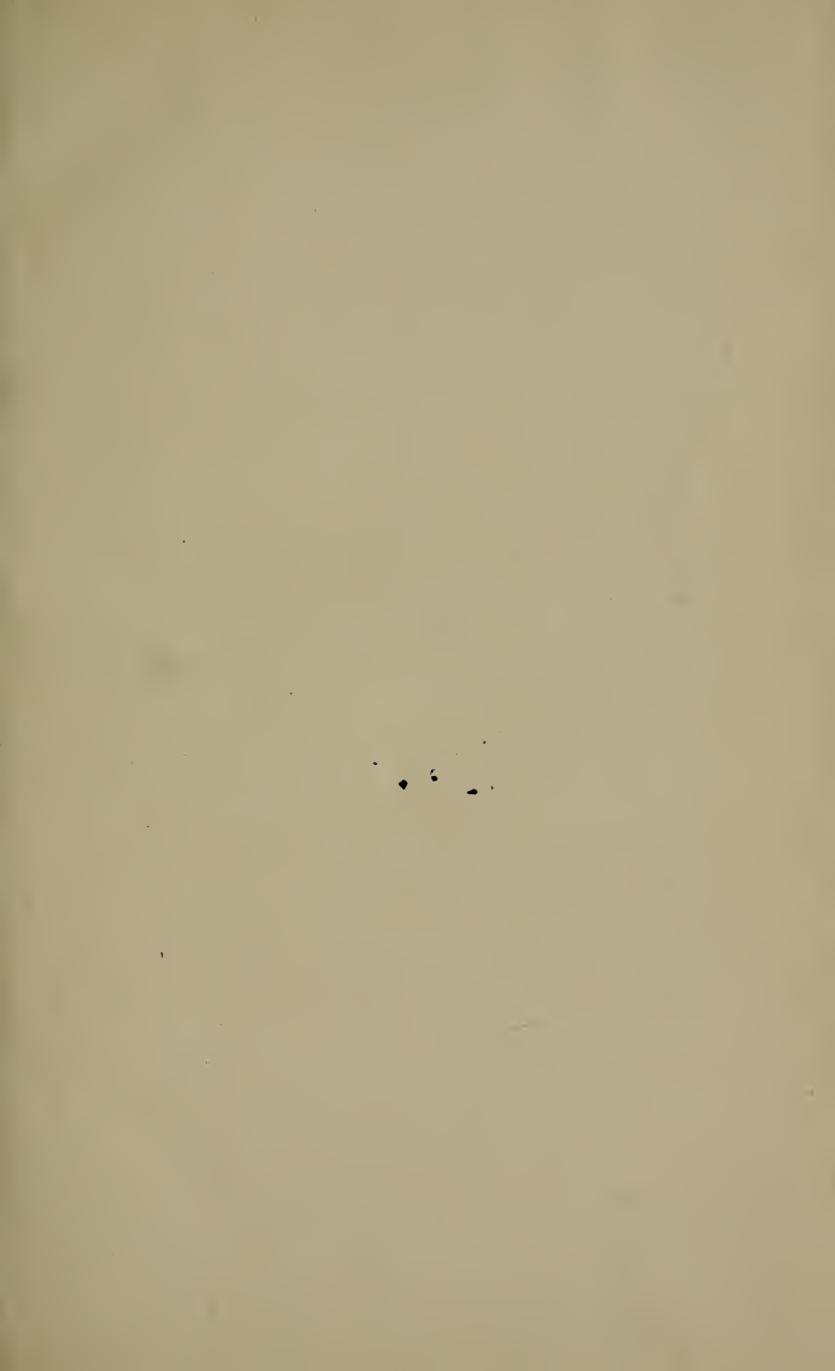
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Robert Cruikshank, fecit

In saying, he raised the veil from the face of the figure.

JAMES HATFIELD

AND THE

BEAUTY OF BUTTERMERE :

A Story of Modern Times.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY ROBERT CRUIKSHANK.

“ I have great comfort from this fellow ; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him : his complexion is perfect gallows ! Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging ! Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage.”—TEMPEST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ADVENTURES

OF

JAMES HATFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

“Or with my Bryan and a book,
Loiter long days at Shawford brook,
There meditate my time away.”

IZAACK WALTON.

“He, sighing, took his leave;
And Heaven knows the heart’s sincere
Of Allen Brooke of Wyndermere.”

OLD WESTMORELAND BALLAD.

EVERY day had been devoted by Esdaile, since his sojourn in the neighbourhood of Windermere, to his favourite recreation. On the occasion of the present morning, himself, with rod and line in hand, (Bryan by his side,) and his distinguished friends, Golefield and Woodsland, had wandered from Grasmere to the spot where we now find them. Woodsland having proceeded to pay a morning visit to a person not far from Windermere, had left the Doctor and his brother bard,

Golefield, together, near the creek already above mentioned, and it was in the course of his way back to them that he met Mr. Jackson.

Into this creek ran the little brook where the char-angler was exercising his "cunning," with all the address of an expert fly-fisher. Golefield had thrown himself listlessly down upon the bank, where, under the grateful canopy of the alders that overshadowed it, and the stream whose margin it was, he reclined like Jacques, ruminating on the babbling torrent, and descanting on all that "was, and is, and is to be," through many a far-winding maze of thought, and many a varying train of association. Bryan too, having lapped a *quantum sufficit* of the pure lymph, quietly stretched himself by the side of the metaphysician, undisturbed, except by the occasional buzzing of a fly in his ear, at which he was obliged in self-defence to snap; while, now and then, his head was raised in looking towards his master, on whom the trusty animal constantly kept his eye.

Too much occupied was his master to return the glance of Bryan; all engrossed was he in his pursuit, humming every now and then a verse from one of his favourite ballads of the "north country," or snatches from poets—simple, sweet, and vigorous,—well-remembered, too, amidst the haunts of flood and greenwood tree, of which they carolled,

and where Naiad and Dryad were the presiding Spirits.

These denizens of golden Arcady!—how would the glowing dream of a Claude or Gaspar Poussin have delighted to waken them up here, amidst the Arcadia of wood and wild around, and see them start across the thicket glade in arch gambols, as some laughing Dryad-nymph would elude the pursuit of the wanton Faun; while he, anon, baffled in his chase, seats him down on the rude stump of some aged trunk, and essays to win the coy fugitive to his side, by the oaten reed, whose tuneful shrill note makes vocal the woodland echoes!

Our angler, however, was not of an imagination so vivid as that of a Poussin or a Claude, any more than he was an instrumental performer, like the Faun whom their art might represent as making melody. No; the limits of his “fancies” were circumscribed by “fancying” he should be able to catch some of the spotted finny dwellers of the crystal stream beneath him; and his soul in the sport, thus he angled, and thus, as we have mentioned, he sung and spoke by turns.

“That’s it—that will do!” he said, succeeding in making his fly alight on the surface of a little ripple in the water, where the shadowing boughs threw a gloom over the stream, and hid or veiled the fine “gut” from which the fly depended, from

the quick-sighted prey—"Softly—so—" he continued, as he let the rippling current wave the fly up and down of itself, without any aid from pulling the line, or moving the rod; and then he stood watching it as he hummed the well-known ditty of Kit Marlowe—

"If that the world and love were young
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
And—"

Here a fish snapped at the fly, and broke off—not the hook, but the stanza, *in medio*, as the "adventure" in Hudibras. "That's it! bravo! I've hooked one!" he exclaimed to Golefield, who was, however, lost in some metaphysical dream, and paid no attention to the angler or his ecstasy.

Bryan shewed more interest in the matter, and roused himself, barked, wagged his tail, and trotted up to his master; who, with the true zest of an experienced fly-fisher, gave the hooked fish "play," and away it ran down the stream, pulling out the whole length of line from the reel.

"Come, that will do; you have gone far enough,—so now we will draw you back, my friend," said the angler, as he proceeded to wind up the line again on his reel, as he continued the song—

"A gown made of the finest wool
With buckles of—the purest gold,—
And—coral—clasps,—and—"

“There! now I believe I have you safe,” he said, as he put his landing-net under the prey, and brought it forth from the stream, flapping its tail, and flung it on the rich bed of grass and flag, spangled with oxlip and mallow flowers, that fringed the margin.

But the angler had now put on another fly. “Ah, ha! I see,” he said to himself, “they will take the ‘red-dun’ to-day;—or suppose I try a black fly?—no; the weather’s too fair. The red-dun and the grey-palmer—these will ‘kill’ to-day, as sure as those waters flow, or as that Golefield’s dreams are up in the seventh heaven of metaphysics. Holloa! my friend, my meditative spirit, how fares it with you?” And as he thus addressed his companion, he rolled up the capacious folds of the fishing-book, in the various pockets of which he kept the different ‘flies,’—while the bard returned answer—

“Oh! well,—very well!” just raising his head to reply, as he dropped it again to look on the paper on which he was writing.

“Oh! he is giving birth to some poetico-metaphysical crotchet or another, I see,” said Esdaile, “so I wont disturb him in any dreams so precious. Lie down, Bryan!—down!—and now for it again.”

So saying, he once more cast his fly, adroitly

making it light on a dark spot of water, quite underneath the overarching shrub and rank sedge that thrust itself forward over the current.

“ That’s it—that will do—softly—a little nearer this way—softly, or its wing will be wetted—there—there—so—

‘ Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves—
Who loves to dwell with me.’

There’s one rising—

‘ And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird’s’—

Hush !—no—he has darted off—

‘ Unto the sweet bird’s throat.’

That’s it !—ah ! I’ve got you this time ;” and again, as the fish seized the fly, he gave it play, and drew it up at length in triumph as before.

In this manner did he continue for some little time practising his angler’s craft, until he had laid three brace of the spotted water-quarry on the grass bed of the bank. And now, finding the poet had regained his legs, arrested his fleeting thoughts on paper, and embodied his meditations in writing, he put up his tackle, and proceeded with him on his way from the stream, towards the creek whither we left Woodsland on his way to meet them.

“ A charming morning’s sport I have had ; this ‘ red-dun ’ has done wonders for me ! ” he said, holding up at the same time his landing net, where the char were deposited on some wet moss and broad leaves of the water-lily—a “ death-couch ” worthy of them.

“ You have indeed been successful. I have no patience for such a pursuit as angling,” replied the bard.

“ No ; because instead of hooking a fish and letting it run with your line, *you* would be yourself ‘ hooked,’ and run away with by some far-fetched fancy, which might well make you forget your line, when you forgot even the ground on which you were standing ! ”

Golefield laughed at the Doctor’s usual banter, as he replied—

“ No, no ! if I took the rod and line in my hand, my soul would be in the sport as certainly as that my form would be glassed in the wave over which I stood. If it were not, I should not have to complain of want of patience, because I should in that case forget the occupation of angling, and be amused with other thoughts ; but I fear, when I did think of it, I should lack patience to pursue it in the exemplary way in which you do.”

“ This is always what people say who do not understand the angler’s ‘ gentle art ; ’ you admire

my patience, without considering that by superior skill, a good angler improves the time which a bad or inexperienced angler loses. The last, indeed, has need of patience; because he catches so few fish, and his 'bites' are so 'far between,' through his own want of address and judgment in the craft."

"Well, there is much truth in what you say, and your reasoning may apply," continued the bard in moralizing vein, "to half the complaints in the world, on the score of success. There is a want of address, or requisite talent, or knowledge, or, yet more, the improvement of favourite opportunities, that forms too often the real secret of ill fortune. I say that this is often the case, though not always, since it need not be specified how frequently very superior merit even is neglected, and 'produces no fruit,' not through its own fault."

So spoke Golefield, while his companion still looking with complacency at the contents of his landing net, proceeded with his wonted epicurean gusto.

"Come, I think I have secured for us no unacceptable addition to our day's banquet. After all, my philosopher, it puts a man much in good humour with himself and all things around him, to find himself seated down (lowly and grovelling con-

sideration as you esteem it) to a good repast, to a more than ordinarily inviting specimen of the creature comforts Heaven has bestowed on us. Come, confess it, all ether, all '*fervidus aer*,' as you are."

Golefield smiled, and only exclaimed to himself, "*Epicuri de grege!*"

"Besides," added the physician, with due earnestness, "char is such a wholesome dish."

Golefield laughed outright now, as he exclaimed — "Ah! Doctor Esdaile, or Doctor Epicurus, I see you are recurring to one of the 'golden rules' of your *Code de Santé!* Forgive me, however, if I should suggest, with reference to this, that your flattering the appetites of your patients is very much like a writer's flattering the less worthy passions of his readers, in order to achieve (if so he may) popularity."

"Nay, nay, you are hardly fair on me. I only flatter the appetites of my patients as a channel by which to administer to their indisposition, either of mind or body. I find it by far the most——"

—"Palatable course!" interposed Golefield, laughing.

"Ay, and the most efficacious no less. I can only say, that if I am wrong, there is yet scarcely one of my patients who would not exclaim, as Cicero does, only putting 'Esdaile' for 'Plato' — you know the passage."

“Namely, ‘that they would rather err, according to your “golden rules,” than go right according to the prescriptions of the rest of the faculty.’”

And here both our philosophers joined in the merriment that the above conclusion justly sanctioned; while Golefield added—“It is well you are candid enough, however, to acknowledge the possibility, at least, of error in your ‘sublime system;’ and if Mr. Howbiggen were here, I can’t help thinking you would hear him mutter out something about ‘placing the cart before the horse,’ as regards other little points, too, of your code. What say you, most sage Doctor?”

“Oh! my worthy patient, Mr. Howbiggen, speaks as his spleen, not his reason, dictates. He amuses me much. He goes out of his way to be uncandid; and against his own conviction, I am confident,” (continued the Doctor, with humorous self-complacency,) “opposes my plan of healing the physical ailments *first*,—before I hope to relieve the jaundice of the mind; for it is this he requires of me. Bless me, he knows as well as I do, only he wont acknowledge it,—with what different eyes a man views all around him, when his bodily health is more confirmed. Everybody but himself will acknowledge this; for as to more abstruse metaphysical questions, which the subject might sanction,

I leave those to yourself and Routhmore. So to return to the savoury point from which we started—namely, the ‘dose’ which, according to my ‘golden rules,’ I shall prescribe to yourself and our excellent host, Woodsland. I mean these splendid char for dinner.”

And he held up the landing-net as he regarded the fish embedded in the moss. “Ah, I wish we had Gertrude Wetherby here to arrange them for us, as she did for Colonel Renmore and myself the first evening I had the pleasure of falling in with him. I am quite disappointed that he could not join our party here, and heartily glad should I be were he amongst us.”

“Should you, indeed!” exclaimed a voice proceeding from some person behind him, which made the Doctor and Golefield both look round to see who he was; when they recognised the traits of their friend Woodsland, who had now just emerged from the thicket that clothed the brow of the slope overhanging the little creek or bay, at which, by different paths, the whole trio had now arrived.

“So you wish that Colonel Renmore, as you call him, were here?—perhaps when you hear of him what I have just heard, you would wish him away.”

“Why, what is the matter?—what have you

heard?" exclaimed both Golefield and Esdaile in surprise.

Woodsland then proceeded to relate the intelligence which Jock had given him, concerning the circumstances of the post-office dilemma, and the marriage of Gertrude with the *soi-disant* Colonel Renmore.

"Well, of all surprises this is the most astonishing!" exclaimed Esdaile, when the account was finished. "What a pity it is that Hatfield was ever educated so well as he certainly must have been, in his earlier days, since it has so much contributed to his power of passing himself off as a 'gentleman.'"

"And with such complete success," replied Woodsland; "but they say he *is* a gentleman by birth,—though who his father is, is unknown; though some say, and he himself favours the belief, that he is a scion of a certain noble house."

"Yes, I have heard the story," said Esdaile; "at any rate, on the strength of this persuasion, he bore the name of the family for some time, and gained unlimited credit by means of it, both in London and Dublin, some time ago. A pretty 'bait' to hold out to be sure; and men seem to have been mere 'gudgeons' in his hands."

"Indeed," said Golefield. "I really regret the man is not what he passed himself off as being; for

a more agreeable companion, or a more sensible and really gentlemanlike man, I never met with."

"You would have liked him, I am confident," said Esdaile, looking round to Woodsland; "his conversation was particularly pleasing; nothing of the opposition or argumentative style in it. But it now strikes me as being artful, for it was a style of indirect flattery—of polite and delicate insinuation. It was gracefully deferential, without appearing at all to flatter the self-love of the person he addressed."

"There certainly must have been great charm in his conversation," replied Woodsland, "if it was such as you describe; and really I regret I had not been introduced to this polite 'Colonel,' who appears to have played his part so adroitly, and with such address; for I had often wished to see Hatfield, since his acts have made his name so bruited about of late; and I may add, his superior manner and style no less so."

"I cannot help smiling," replied Esdaile, "at the amazement this discovery must have occasioned our worthy friends at Howbiggen-house and Blacktarn. Often had they wished 'to see Hatfield;' little did they dream, when they expressed the wish, that he was so near them!"

"And perhaps they may have reason to wish yet that they never had seen him; for who knows?"

said Golefield, "our 'gentleman' may have been practising his knack at 'counterfeit' at the expense of some of them!"

"I should not be surprised," replied Esdaile; "and if I remember right, there was some little 'bet' between honest Lawton and the 'Colonel,' of which, be assured, we have yet to hear the result;"—and Esdaile laughed at the thought of the promised denouement of this little mystery amongst others. "But whom have we here, approaching us in such a hurry?" he added, as his merriment subsided. Indeed all risible propensity was cut short, by the purport of a letter which was now put into his hand by a messenger from Blacktarn, who had repaired to Grasmere, where Esdaile was sojourning with Woodslan, and having been directed onwards to Windermere, had accordingly repaired thither to find him. Esdaile lost no time in perusing the letter.

"I must leave you," he exclaimed, to his friends Woodslan and Golefield, with much concern in his countenance, "without any delay: this letter states that Miss Lawton is seriously ill, and my medical services are required as speedily as possible."

"Indeed, I am most sorry to learn this," exclaimed Woodslan, while Golefield also expressed his regrets; "pray mention my concern," continued Woodslan, "for his daughter's illness, to

my worthy friend Lawton ; and since it appears I must lose you, Doctor, why, all I can say is, ‘ may all good angels wait on you,’ and prosper your endeavours to restore your fair patient.”

So saying, the two bards took leave of the physician, who, getting into the vehicle that the servant from Blacktarn had ready, and drawn up close by in the high road, he hastily drove off to Grasmere, doffed his angling dress, and then proceeded onward to Blacktarn.

The two “ Genii” did not forget their estimable epicurean friend when at dinner ; the char he had provided for their entertainment contributed to bring him back, with savoury memento, to their minds.

“ I trust sincerely,” said Woodsland, “ he may meet with his usual success in restoring Miss Lawton ; for ‘ droll’ though he is in character, and original in his treatment, yet he is generally successful in ‘ curing,’ rather than ‘ killing,’ his patients, which is so happy a variety in the practice of medicine that no wonder it renders him popular !”

“ I dare say, if the truth may be said, he never felt a more painful interest in any case, throughout the whole course of his practice, than in the present one.”

“ Ay, I believe I have discovered that it is true, what people have whispered about, that our good

friend Esdaile has a thought one of these days of 'proposing' to Miss Lawton. He is on terms of much friendship with herself and her father."

"Poor girl! I much fear her present illness is the result of the shock her spirits must have sustained in learning this affair of Hatfield; for she had most certainly conceived an attachment for him, and no small one either, as 'Colonel Renmore' and her father's guest. It was plain to perceive it, and when I told the poor Doctor what I had observed, not the wan hue of the inside of those alder leaves under which he stood angling was paler than his cheek."

"Well, well; he is at any rate rid of the rival who was so dangerous. But poor Gertrude Wetherby! I fear it will be some time before *she* will recover the shock this affair must have occasioned her," said Woodsland.

"Upon my word it is a serious matter; I feel for the poor girl with all my heart," replied the benign Golefield; "and Fenton, too, who cherishes her as his own daughter, he must be seriously affected by this sad business. I shall lose no time in looking in at Lorton, and offering what poor consolation my presence may possibly afford him."

Thus conversing, their colloquy being engrossed by the topics of all-absorbing interest, which we have heard them descanting on, the brother bards

sat together and mused on all the chances and marvels which throng the romance of real life more singularly than even that of fiction.

“Ay,” said Golefield, in reply to a remark of Woodsland to this effect ; “real life, out-romances romance !”

CHAPTER II.

“Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more :
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill.
How false and cold seem all things !”

SHELLEY.

CONSIDERING how much Laura Lawton had been hurt and piqued at witnessing the attentions paid at the Regatta, by her father's late guest, to the humble though lovely belle of the “vil-lagerie,” it has by no means awakened our surprise to hear of the indisposition which had occasioned the attendance of Doctor Esdaile. We remember that she, together with Mr. Lawton, had taken leave of the festivities previously to those disclosures which had added so serious and extraordinary character to their interest ; nor did she go, without being subsequently missed by that observant and “lively-witted” lady who, on her arrival with Mr. Howbiggen at the scene of festivities, looked round

the first thing for the Lawtons. Not finding them however, she, with a laudable desire to supply to them ample intelligence of all the interesting events they had failed to witness, lost no time, after the festivities were over, in hastening to Blacktarn.

Not more eager was Miss Howbiggen to enlighten their ignorance, than to lighten her own bosom of the weighty matter it yearned, as in the instance of Midas's wife, to be relieved of. The very next day, then, the carriage was ordered forth for Blacktarn; and if Miss Howbiggen had been hitherto anxious (or, as her brother would term it, "fidgety") to pour forth the contents of her budget before her friends, the Lawtons, the more so was she now, since the news of the marriage, had been just added to her stock of intelligence.

"How will Laura be surprised when she hears of it!" she exclaimed; "will it not astonish her! And what though it may occasion her perhaps a little pain,—considering the impression this very insinuating person, the *soi-disant* Colonel, assuredly made on her,—yet it is as well she knew the truth at once. It must come to her ears sooner or later; and besides, if a little shock may possibly be occasioned at first, it ought to be relieved by considering what an escape she has had! Indeed," continued the fair spinster, with amusing self-complacency, "we may *both* be thankful, for I confess this Colo-

nel, as he called himself, and as he appeared to be, was not altogether without making some slight impression in his favour on myself too." And here, if the humorous reader pleases, he may imagine her blushing at the "soft confession."

With these considerations, then, in her mind, away she went; not the least cause of her restlessness being her apprehension lest herself should not be the first to impart the intelligence. Her thoughts far outran the carriage wheels, and eagerly did she alight when they at length placed her before the portico of Blacktarn. On entering the drawing-room, she was all-anxiety, after the preliminary salutations between herself and Mr. and Miss Lawton, to launch the subject uppermost in her mind.

"You have not heard the news—have you?" she inquired, anxious to ascertain, in the first instance, whether any one had anticipated her in imparting the intelligence which she so hoped to be the foremost to communicate. She was soon set at rest on this point, by the vacant countenance and unconscious innocence with which Mr. Lawton replied—"No; what news, pray?"

"Oh, then, you have not heard it? I have so much to tell you that I scarcely know where to begin. Oh! I am so sorry you did not wait a little longer on the island. It would have been well worth your while. My love," she continued, ab-

ruptly, to Laura, "how pale and unwell you look." Then returning to the subject which so much engrossed her—"Yes, I am so sorry you did not stay. You lost so much by running away!"

"Well, well," interposed Mr. Lawton, anxious to stop this stream of tantalization, for such it was; "pray have the kindness to inform us what all this was, of so much interest, that Laura and myself lost, by leaving the island when we did.—Ahem!" he added, looking seriously, first at Miss Howbiggen, and then glancing at Laura; "for my part we both of us considered we had had quite enough by the time when we went away.—Ahem!"

Laura slightly coloured and looked aside, as Miss Howbiggen turned her eyes searchingly on her countenance, while at the same time she continued—

"Well, then, it appears you have not heard about the marriage!"

"No; what marriage?" said Mr. Lawton. "In the neighbourhood, was it?"

"Oh, yes; it took place not far off!" replied Miss Howbiggen, looking significantly at Laura.

"Let us hear, pray, all about it," said Mr. Lawton; "for you are famous for hearing all matters of local interest—ahem!—before any one else."

"We shall be glad to hear it?" added Laura to her father's words.

“ Shall you?” replied their tantalizing informant, simpering and pursing up her mouth, with a significance in her look truly irritating to the impatience of Mr. Lawton, and in which the gentle Laura was not altogether without concurring; and reasonably so, considering the subject was one so justly calculated to interest ladies.

“ Who should you suppose, now, the lady is?” said Miss Howbiggen, determined to enjoy a little while longer the suspense and surmise of those she addressed; even as a cat plays with a mouse before she pounces on it, and rids it of its pain beneath her fatal claws.

“ I’m sure I can’t tell,” was the reply of Mr. Lawton, waxing (to the delight of Miss Howbiggen) more and more fidgety; which effect, in discomfiting his usual solemnity of bearing, rendered him more than ordinarily droll in her eyes. “ Perhaps,” he added, smiling, with a good humour that at the same time did him credit—“ perhaps the bride is no other than yourself!”

“ No, indeed,” she replied, with a somewhat indignant toss of the head. “ I thank heaven that *I* have escaped at least;—but who would have thought it?”

“ Oh! you thank Heaven *you* have escaped,” rejoined Mr. Lawton; “then it should appear that the gentleman (whoever he may be) *was* an ad-

mirer of yours. So my surmise might possibly—ahem!—have been right!” he added, looking, with an air of satisfaction at his own sagacity, first at Miss Howbiggen and then at Laura, on whose lip a smile was playing—perhaps of kind congratulation at the fair spinster’s “escape,”—perhaps indicative of a certain degree of amusement at her having shewn she had considered herself thus in danger.

“Who can the bride be?” thought Laura, as she ran over in her mind all the country belles she knew, from Penrith to Keswick, and from Appleby to Kendal.

“Well, then,” replied the relenting spinster, at last, “I will keep you in suspense no longer.”

And indeed she was as good as her word; for, if she had been tardy and tantalizing hitherto, she now made ample amends for thus painfully keeping her listeners on the tenter-hooks of expectation, by pouring forth, as fast as she could give it utterance, the flood of singular incidents which had been pent in her bosom, and to which she had indeed longed to yield a vent. Having first satisfied them that the bride was no other than the Beauty of Buttermere, she proceeded with the other portions of the story connected with this main circumstance. Surprise followed quickly on surprise; and scarcely did she give her hearers time to express their as-

tonishment, as she rapidly hurried them from the post-office to the lake, and thence to the church at Lorton, and the circumstances attendant on the scene in that sacred spot.

On the conclusion of Miss Howbiggen's narrative, there was a pause for a few moments, during which, as you might see by his countenance, the storm was gathering strength in Mr. Lawton's bosom, ere it gave itself vent in words. At length he exclaimed—

“The atrocious, outrageous rascal! So we have been harbouring no other than Hatfield—the notorious Hatfield—all this time. I am overwhelmed with astonishment!—the plausible villain!—the good-for-nothing, insinuating, too guilty, because too agreeable rascal!—the—the—” and here turning round to Laura, and witnessing, from the coming and fading hues on her cheek, the struggle that was passing in her bosom, he continued. “Ah, my dear child, I don't wonder at your being a little moved,—I too am moved, much moved, myself. To hold this person in the estimation I did, as a man of birth and distinction, and high character, and to witness with approbation the attentions he paid my daughter—all this may well move me as a father, to find how grossly I have been deceived, and my child's affections been tampered with.”

But here poor Laura's feelings got the better of her, and despite all the endeavour to suppress them, especially in the presence of Miss Howbiggen, they found vent in the tears that forced themselves from her eyes. Her father meantime continued—

“Well, well, child! I don't wonder, I repeat, at your being a little moved,—so am I too; but every other feeling in your mind, no less than my own, must yield to indignation.”

“Indifference, indifference,—say rather,” replied Laura, as she stood looking out (or rather pretending to do so) at the window, endeavouring to conceal, as best she might, the conflict in her bosom, where the feelings of partiality that had been recently fostered battled hard against the condemnation that was now challenged to crush them. Little felt she the indifference she spoke of. She endeavoured, in continuation, to turn the course of remark from herself and her own feelings to those of another, for whom, as one of her own sex, and in a certain degree a sister sufferer on the present occasion, she might well feel, as she said, “And poor Gertrude! I am very sorry for her—very sorry.”

“Ay, poor girl!” said Mr. Lawton, “I feel for her from my soul—to be the dupe of a swindler!”

“But then how could she suspect, under an ad-

dress so fascinating—so much that of apparent frankness—that any deceit could lurk?” replied Laura; and she added, like a true woman, “and then, she doubtless loved him—and was beloved too by him?”

“There is no palliation to be offered for the enormity which this accomplished scoundrel (as I must call him) has committed, in ruining poor Gertrude’s peace and prospects!” replied Mr. Lawton, indignantly.

“Indeed, it is difficult to excuse him,” interposed Miss Howbiggen, who had been for the last few moments a silent spectator of the effect produced by the purport of her intelligence, but now again found a tongue. “It is difficult to find any excuse for him, on the plea even of his great love for Gertrude.”

“Then he did indeed love her?” asked Laura.

“So much so that he was blinded to every keener sense of the cruelty of his conduct, or if not blinded, at any rate too much overruled to be able to relinquish the possession of her. Poor, unhappy girl, I understand she is now delirious—dangerously ill—at Mr. Fenton’s; she calls him her father, and he deserves the name, from the kindness with which I am told he is at present treating her. Poor thing! the story is melancholy!” and here she turned to Laura, “Yes, my

dear, I don't wonder at your being affected at the circumstances; young as you are, and alive to impressions, I don't wonder at your being a little moved, considering—"

And here was a pause for a moment or two. "But I will not dwell on the subject," she continued, seeing that her expression of sympathy, mistaken in judgment as it was, rather irritated than allayed the conflict that was still battling in her fair friend's bosom. "I will not, I repeat, dwell on the subject, or if I say a word more on it, it will be again and again to express my thankfulness to Heaven at the escape we have both had, in not being ourselves the victims of the arts of this accomplished juggler."

Laura's concern was too great to permit her to smile, which she otherwise must have done, at the innocent vanity of her elder maiden friend, in coupling them together, as objects of design as regarded their "attractions." Mr. Lawton, however, felt with full sincerity the self gratulation expressed by the amiable spinster, and swelled forth with due heartiness the chorus of her "oh! be joyful," as he exclaimed—

"You say rightly, Miss Howbiggen; the satisfaction we ought to feel at the escape we have had in not being linked with the 'kith and kin' of this too dexterous and plausible adventurer, should

banish every more kindly and pleasing remembrance in his favour that might chance to whisper to us of the, certainly, agreeable society he afforded in himself. You say quite rightly !—we have had a great escape,—a merciful escape,—and I cannot be too thankful for it.”

“ Only fancy !” exclaimed Miss Howbiggen to Laura, and still amusingly keeping up the plural pronoun, “ if we had not escaped—if either of us had in a hapless moment been led to the altar by this accomplished dissembler, what a number of titles or denominations we should have gained by this alliance ! as many as the ‘ aliases’ the gentleman has gone by—a catalogue as numerous, though not quite so distinguished, as an Austrian duchess’s. Let me see—‘ we’ might have boasted the names of Mrs. Hatfield, the Honourable Mrs. Manners, the Honourable Mrs. Hope, the Honourable Mrs. Renmore—bless me ! we should have been overloaded with ‘ honours.’ ”

And as she smiled in naming this ‘ honourable’ catalogue, she tried to awaken a smile of cheerfulness, with her usual good nature, (for she had no malice at heart, or spirit of calumny in her gossiping characteristics,) on the brow of Laura. At the same time Mr. Lawton asked, “ And pray what after all is the ‘ gentleman’s’ real name—his right designation ?”

“ That I can’t tell,” replied Miss Howbiggen ; “ for though it is generally supposed to be Hatfield, yet it is also said this name was merely that of a person who brought him up, and gave him the rudiments of that education which his own talent and love of mental improvement have since matured. The name of his parents he is said to have discarded, after having run away from them in early boyhood, and to have ever since called himself by the adopted one of ‘ Hatfield.’ Such is the report, according to some !”

“ The truth, however, must at no very great distance of time transpire,” observed Lawton, “ if, as you related to us, the officers of justice were so close upon him. Escape, one should think, must now be impossible.”

“ But he did escape, did he not ?” asked Laura, eagerly, of Miss Howbiggen ; “ you did not say that he was actually taken ?”

“ No, not actually ; but there appeared every probable chance that he speedily would be. Certain, however, it is, that when they fancied they had only a step or two round a corner to make, in order to secure him, he had suddenly disappeared.”

“ Delinquent as he may be, yet one is almost tempted to hope he may escape, he is so clever,” said Laura.

“ Your sex is generous indeed, and forgiving,” said Mr. Lawton ; “ but, really, though we sometimes feel inclined to hope that great ingenuity or cleverness, in its attempts at escape, may be successful, yet the danger to society in such a person as this being at large prevails in making us trust a stop may be put to his too-successful system of frauds. No ; I cannot wish that he may escape,—he is no common delinquent.”

“ No,” replied Miss Howbiggen ; “ an *uncommon* one ; but, I dare say, by this time more news has been gleaned of his movements. I shall not pass through the village of Buttermere without ordering the carriage to stop while I make inquiries whether such is the case or not. I wish also to learn how poor Gertrude is—I trust, not worse !”

So saying, she rose from her seat in order to take her departure, having now fully accomplished her commission in coming to Blacktarn. Her budget of intelligence being emptied, she was forthwith animated with the laudable wish of putting, if she could, a new stock into it ; so begging her friends Mr. Lawton and Laura to give herself and Mr. Howbiggen the pleasure of their company for a few days, whenever it should be convenient to them to come, in order that they might talk over all the interesting circumstances of which their neighbourhood had been the scene, she took her leave.

As she withdrew, she again begged Laura to think of "their happy escape, and not revert to any less welcome recollections; though it was no wonder she was at present a little moved, *considering*——"

Laura answered her by a faint smile, and felt no small relief when the door had closed on her talkative friend, who, in spite of the kindly and encouraging sympathies she had expressed, had been found on the present occasion a little too painfully communicative.

Though Laura felt no less than Miss Howbiggen that she had reason to congratulate herself on the "escape" upon which that lady had been so eloquent, yet it was difficult for her to divest herself at once of those feelings of interest which had been fostered in her bosom, and which might well be supposed to occasion her an additional struggle to that which she had already experienced. It was difficult, we repeat, to crush at once the feelings that had been suffered to gain, as we have witnessed, too much strength for her peace.

CHAPTER III.

“ He prayeth best who loveth best ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

RHYME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

MISS HOWBIGGEN did not fail to institute the inquiries she had proposed making on her way through the village of Buttermere; but to her disappointment, nothing further could as yet be elicited, as regarded the fate of either the hero or heroine of the painful romance of which that neighbourhood had been the scene. She therefore proceeded home.

We, however, must linger on the spot, in order to bear witness to the sensation occasioned throughout the “villagerie” at the singular and bitter catastrophe that had taken place in the fortunes of its favourite, no less than “flower,” Gertrude. There was but one feeling swayed the rude bosoms of its humble denizens. That of pain and

regret that poor Gertrude should not have met with a better fate in the disposal of her hand. Such was the universal sentiment felt and expressed; her story, meantime, being dressed up with such adscititious colouring as is ever given by the rude lovers of the marvellous, in relating anything “new or strange.”

Universal, did we call this feeling of kindly sorrow? Is it possible there could have been one who did not participate in it?—one, too, whom we should suppose ought to have felt it more poignantly than any of her neighbours? Is it possible, we ask, that in her bosom, anger and dissatisfaction at what she termed her “stiff-necked” child’s want of duty and obedience to her wishes should have prevailed over those sentiments of regret and sorrow that every one besides herself experienced?

Such, however, was the case. Mrs. Wetherby was inflexible in her determination to steel her breast against “the disobedient generation,” as she had learned to say, in the canting language of the conventicle. Thus did she evince how much a false sense of religion, so far from correcting and improving the heart, only renders it more harsh and ungenerous, in the sour dogmas, and austere no less than narrow prejudices, with which it warps the feelings. Mrs. Wetherby, however, in view-

ing the matter in the light she did, only considered, and certainly with due consistency, that she was acting according to the dictates of the most true spirit of religion.

Indeed, the best, most amiable, and most tolerating disposition naturally, could not fail of being warped and vitiated by a system of bigotry such as that to which dame Wetherby had for some time past subscribed. She did not, however, cherish sentiments so harsh, yet so strictly conformable to what she deemed religion, without finding that they were opposed by those who took a different view of both religion and feeling; who considered, in fact, that want of charity (to say nothing of maternal compunction) was not only repugnant to religion, but to nature. Her condemnation of the man, also, on whom her luckless daughter's affections and hand had been bestowed, was unlimited; but he, too, appeared to have some one to say a word for him, as will be more apparent from the following conversation.

“ Ah! Mrs. Wetherby,” said a venerable old man, who was seated opposite her, with a half-filled can in his hand, at the Traveller's Rest, “ take my word for it, that what is a man's destiny there is no avoiding, do what you will. He was born to it—he was born to it; there's no avoiding a man's destiny.”

“Mike, Mike—” for the reader has already perceived, from the tone of his observation, that it was Mike who had just addressed her, and whom she thought it prudent always to conciliate, being a little afraid of him—“what is the doctrine you advance? So you would attempt to excuse a man for his villany, by taking the blame off his shoulders, and making him the mere instrument of Fate?”

So said Mrs. Wetherby, whose “orthodoxy,” shocked as it was by the tendency of the ancient mariner’s remark, will, in this respect at least, find the balance of approval on her side, however much bigotry and false notions of religious duty might have generally warped her feelings in other respects, and as regards her daughter. Mike replied laconically—

“Ay, I would! A good deal!”

“A good deal, say you? You must place the blame entirely, or not at all, on this ‘destiny’ you speak of,” said Mrs. Wetherby, sighing deeply, as expressive of her horror and dissent at the old seaman’s words. “But you gentlemen of the sea are very superstitious, I am told, and so I don’t much wonder at your speaking as you do. But for my part, I maintain that if we are free agents——”

“*If!*” interposed the heathenish mariner, chuckling forth the hypothetical monosyllable, as he glanced a look of mingled compassion and contempt at the demure and orthodox landlady.

“I maintain,” continued the dame, “that our own bad propensities—our own wilfully turning aside to deeds of vice and dishonour—make us iniquitous, and made this man so. I will not hear of his being forced into evil ways by untoward circumstances. I say, he might have eschewed evil,” added the goodly dame, “if he had pleased. But no; he loved evil ways; and if he is to be hanged, as I nothing doubt but that he will, he deserves it richly.”

She spoke with a fervour worthy the most enthusiastic tub-orator from the time of Prynnne to that of Henley, and from Henley’s to that of her friend the pseudo-preacher, Quandish.

“He is not,” she continued, “in any way, that I see, to be exculpated—a good-for-nothing cast-away!—the deceitful, ‘painted-skinned’ viper, ay, verily, that has stung us, when we cherished him even in our bosom!—the villain, I say!—the——”

“Fie! fie! Mrs. Wetherby! It is not for me, now your daughter lies ill and wretched, to say a word to vex your feelings. The Power of Mercy above us forbid! But it would be as well (pray excuse me, dame) to have a little more forbearing spirit towards the man on whom, at least, your daughter deeply and tenderly (although unhappily) placed her affections, though he might indeed be unfortunate.”

“Unfortunate!—you astonish me Mike, to talk

so. What ! does religion teach us to have forbearance for a villain like this?—you put me out of all patience !”

“ What does the sacred Teacher himself say ?” replied Mike, whose calmness of manner was singularly contrasted with the zealous and irate tone of the more orthodox disputant ; and if the colour in her cheeks had been excited hitherto, it kindled into a yet deeper scarlet, as Mike continued, with a look of significance there was no mistaking,—“ Why, he says, ‘ Let those who are without sin cast a stone.’ I have said enough. The cases are not quite parallel, perhaps, but the general lesson is forbearance and kindness. Now, only think of your poor daughter, whom they say was positively frightened into this marriage with Hatfield, because she shuddered at the prospect to which she was being driven, of an alliance with that loathsome, insidious, reprobate, that yet more (to use your own figure) ‘ viper,’ in the shape of man—that Quandish !”

“ Mike !” interrupted the bigoted dame, “ I will be obliged to you not to say (in my house, at least) a word against that good man, who has been doing yet more and more his duty, in endeavouring to apprehend a villain. Would he had been successful before the fatal meeting at the altar, between that criminal and a daughter of mine ! As for *her*—never shall she enter these doors again !”

“And I am sure, Mrs. Wetherby,” rejoined Mike, rising from his seat, “I never wish to enter them again, if you express yourself thus of your child! Look you, this is poor religion, for it is not charity! Who was there that did not love her? and who does not feel for her but—(I grieve I should be forced to say it)—but yourself? For so it should seem to me, to hear you talk thus. And *you*, a *religious* woman, too, and a ‘meetinger!’” he added, with a scornful laugh, while Mrs. Wetherby’s choler rose still higher and higher, rather giving strength to the cause against herself than otherwise; since the sense of religion she exhibited, so far from partaking of the forbearance that more duly characterizes it, only evinced its worst feature, intolerance. And assuredly, if there are any who would have sided with her, a little while ago, in her opposition to Mike’s doctrine of destiny, or fatality, the tables (it must now be confessed) were turned against her; and the old seaman’s view of the question must be acknowledged the most reasonable, as well as the most feeling.

“It is the duty, I maintain,” rejoined Mrs. Wetherby, “of every child to obey her parent. And it was her duty to have given her hand to the excellent person I had wished—not to the treacherous——”

“*Treacherous!*” iterated Mike; “perhaps this

‘*excellent* person,’ as you call him, may one day be acknowledged by you as being as worthy the title ‘treacherous’ as the man you condemn! Possibly you may find he was the secret betrayer of a benefactor, and had been an accomplice; for which reason he was afraid of making a discovery of Hatfield in your house, lest he might be exposed himself; and then his game of endeavouring to win your daughter, while he made you a dupe, would have been cut short—ha, ha!”

The old man again laughed scornfully, while the dame, unable to refute her antagonist, was only able to tell him it was but slander he indulged in, as she added, “I will not believe anything so monstrous of that good man. And happy, too happy would it have been for Gertrude, had she been less of a ‘stubborn one,’ and listened unto my words.”

“What!” replied Mike, who had now resumed for a moment longer his seat, since a new impulse had been given to the discussion; “would you have her give her hand even to an unexceptionable person, if her heart could not go with it? but to such a base being as this Simmonds—ay, that is his name, as you will one day learn—”

But here the old man involuntarily started as he saw, or fancied he saw, the effigies of the very being he was speaking of in terms of such just reprobation. For as his eye by chance glanced to-

wards the casement, a face presented itself, peering through the little diamond-shaped panes, whose livid look and sordid traits, together with the sandy hair, freckled face, distorted mouth, sunken small fiery eyes that betokened a tiger-like cunning and ferocity, — that countenance yet more of mingled craft and ruffianism—all, all, betokened the demon-like and hateful traits of Simmonds, or Quandish. The face was instantly withdrawn as its glance was met by that of Mike, and on his hastening to the casement, he exclaimed—

“By heavens! it was the very miscreant of whom I was speaking, or these eyes are deceived. Mayhap, through the dimness of old age, I may have seen some other object—it appeared to me, however, to present the very effigies of the man you admire so, Mrs. Wetherby.”

“What, Mr. Quandish, do you mean to say? call him not by such opprobrious terms. But no, it is impossible that you should have seen *him*; he is occupied in the good work of endeavouring to arrest the steps of a worthless criminal!”

“Well, I am astonished!” exclaimed Mike, turning from the window and resuming his seat. “Whoever the person was that I saw, he has disappeared; but I could have sworn it was the miscreant himself; for talk of a man, and he is sure to appear. The man makes me ill to look at him, if indeed it was he who was eaves-dropping at the

window. I don't wonder at poor dear Gertrude loathing the sight of such a being, whose Judas face one can't help turning from with disgust and misgiving. I don't wonder, I repeat, at her turning from him with terror, and the more so since in the person she *did* turn towards for stay and succour, poor thing, she saw all that a lass's eye might approve, and her heart too!"

"I must insist on hearing no more of this; if she is united to him, let me, at least, hear no more of it," said Mrs. Wetherby, waxing yet more warm. "As for me, I will not be seen to countenance such delinquency. Forbid it, Heaven, that I," she continued, in a genuine sanctimonious whine, "should hold up an encouragement to rebellious children to run in the face of parents."

"Ay, ay, Mr. Quandish has taught you the essence of religion, dame, I see, in these forbearing considerations," interposed Mike, while the irate landlady continued—

"And to think that you at your years should hold up so mutinous and wicked a doctrine! And to go on, too, trying to excuse that villain—why," she proceeded, as a perfectly novel after-thought suddenly suggested itself—"why, he owes me—this Colonel—a matter of, I dare say, thirteen pounds for rent, and things supplied while he was in this house,—not a penny of which I shall ever see, I will be bound for it."

Mike could scarcely repress the inclination towards risibility which he felt, at this real leaven of Mammon oozing out amidst so much pretended purity of religion and conscientiousness. All risible propensities, however, were checked by the indignation the generous old seaman felt at so much sordidness of spirit, that could manifest such soreness on a minor cause of complaint, while it pretended to be so absorbed in its pain and reprobation of a much greater and more serious one.

“You wished me gone a little while ago,” he said, rising abruptly from his seat, as he placed his unfinished can on the table and knocked the light out of his pipe, together with its tobacco embers; “I shall not delay. What! do you talk of the paltry debt your son-in-law (for such he is) owes you?—nay, don’t look so angry, dame; you must hear the name of ‘son-in-law.’ Why, set your heart at rest—I will pledge my faith for his paying you the sum. Heavens! what is religion—what is spiritual feeling, if it can’t wean the mind from the hankering after a little worldly lucre it fears to lose, when matters so much more worthy its interest ought to be all in all to it—as a man should think? And I tell you again and again,” he continued, as he advanced nearer the door, “the dear lass is much to be excused, much to be pitied, and so is the man to whom her destinies are united.”

And so saying, and without waiting to hear any

further effusions of the landlady's wrath, the old man directed a glance of mingled scorn and indignation at her, and left the hostelry.

On gaining the outside of the porchway, he looked round to see if he could discern anything more of the being he had taken for Quandish; but no form answering to that description presented itself, as the old man said to himself—"I must have been mistaken, I suppose; and the dame was right enough in reckoning that he was still on the pursuit of the boy," (for such was the designation that Mike occasionally, as we have heretofore witnessed, applied to Hatfield, from his remembrances of him as a child.) "May he escape—may he escape—is the prayer of old Mike. But it is in vain to hope it," muttered the old man, after a pause, and as he continued brooding over his thoughts—"in vain to hope it; but," he continued, as he struck the staff on which he leaned against the ground, "the miscreant that betrays him, that battens on the price of his blood,—let him beware how he crosses the path of old Mike!"

So saying, while a glow of fearful determination lit up his ghastly and withered features, the ancient mariner sought the solitary retreat of his rock-hewn cell.

CHAPTER IV.

"Were every single instance of justice, like that of benevolence, useful to society, this would be a more simple state of the case, and seldom liable to great controversy."

HUME'S ESSAY ON MORAL SENTIMENT.

"To keep the same principle in view, the general good would require that we should surrender the robber to justice, though private scruples would admonish us not to break our word with him."

PALEY'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

MISS HOWBIGGEN, in returning home, did not exactly find it, as Mr. Lillynore would say, "a bower of roses!" In a word, she was doomed to encounter, without compunction on his part, the sour triumph and raillery which her amiable brother evinced at the "distinguished guest," about whom she had made "such a fuss," having turned out a mere adventurer, and an object of legal pursuit. In fact, the strain of satirical taunt which we remember his indulging subsequently to the "post-office" discovery had flowed on, unabated, nay increased, ever since.

"He, he, he!" chuckled out the cynic; "I told

you, you could never know what people might turn out to be."

"You may amuse yourself as you please," replied the forbearing Hetty, "but it is utterly unjust your pretending to flatter yourself, by laying claim to having suspected anything wrong about the person that was lately our guest; and if you said anything to me in disparagement of him, or to the purport you now express, it arose merely from a love of wilful contradiction of myself, and from no other cause whatsoever."

To this very just reasoning it did not suit Mr. Howbiggen to listen, as he continued to amuse himself in the indulgence of his peculiar vein of sour raillery.

"The estate in Caithness—he, he! I dare say, Hetty, you could place your finger on the precise spot in the map where it is!"

"Amuse yourself, Mr. Howbiggen, as you think fit; but I will maintain, that if you had one spark of the amiability—ay, and brilliancy—that this unfortunate person has, you might consider yourself with much greater respect than you are at present entitled to do."

An indignant toss of the head and glance of reproach accompanied these words, with the due dignity Miss Hetty Howbiggen knew so well to assume. Verily, she was much vexed; but she was

destined to be more so, as her brother still applied the goad to her patience.

“He, he, he!—the Honourable M.P.!—Renmore, of Clan-renmore!—he, he!”

“Yes,” exclaimed Hetty, her voice being raised to a half scream under the irritation occasioned by this provoking chuckle,—“yes, Mr. Howbiggen, you might consider yourself fortunate if you possessed this ill-fated person’s agreeable and engaging address, and the enlarged, humane, and liberal sentiments he ever used to express. It is a great pity indeed he is situated as he is.”

“I told you how it would be,” rejoined her brother, after giving vent to his merriment in a laugh, which, however, induced a fit of coughing; “but—but—ugh, ugh, ugh!—you see you never listen to my words. Now, let me give you a piece of advice once for all: never think of admitting any one into your house of whom you know nothing, however agreeable or engaging his address, manners, and conversation, may be. But, like all women,—ugh, ugh—you only look at objects as they please you, without considering how far good or safe they may be. Just as that Doctor Esdaile, with his *Code de Santé*, declares that your liking a viand is a proof it agrees with you, and therefore, concludes this sage epicurean and dialectician, it is wholesome!” And having delivered himself as well

as his cough would let him, the cynic muttered out, or rather chuckled out, "Renmore, of Clan-Renmore !—he, he, he !—M.P., et cetera."

"Dear, dear ! how provoking this useless gibe is !" exclaimed Hetty.

"I always thought it looked odd and suspicious, his being so backward to accept the various invitations offered him, and his sculking about the meerbanks and tarns, with a fishing rod in his hand, by way of excuse, as it appears now, for keeping to himself, and out of the way of people—I thought it seemed odd and strange !"

"Now, you never thought any such thing, Mr. Howbiggen !" exclaimed his sister, with all the confidence of truth lighting up at once her brow, and giving vigour to her utterance ; "for what was it you used to say to me, when I—yes I, said the conduct you specify was suspicious ? Why, you used to cut me short by saying, ' Pooh ! he is quite right to keep to himself ; he does not wish to be "bored !" ' Yes, such was your elegant expression, and such your argument. But really, Mr. Howbiggen, you had better not talk, or exert your voice any more, for it only brings on a fit of coughing."

"Ay, this odious, detestable cold and cough, or, at any rate, an aggravation of them, are all I gained by going to that vile regatta. I wish I had

stayed at home ; but a man can never do as he pleases—he is dragged here, and dragged there, and dragged everywhere, at the caprice of others ! I went to please, not myself—Lord, no !—but you !”

This amiable speech was terminated by another fit of coughing, which prevented the ascetic sufferer from hearing Hetty’s reply, that he had caught the cold previously to going to the “ vile regatta,” as he called it.

In this agreeable, amiable course did the stream of domestic life flow on for some days at Howbiggen house, or rather the “ villa Howbiggen,” it should be more properly as well as classically called. At the expiration of this interval, the period had arrived when Mr. Lawton was expected, with his daughter, according to the invitation which Miss Howbiggen had so kindly given them. Mr. Lawton accordingly arrived, but unaccompanied by his daughter, whom he described as having been considerably indisposed, but was now better, though not quite well enough to accompany him on his visit.

Laura had, in fact, been more indisposed than she was willing to acknowledge to her father ; but under the superintendence of Dr. Esdaile, whom we remember being sent for from Windermere to Blacktarn, she had rallied ; and her physician, though he had left her much better, did not remit as yet

paying visits to his fair acquaintance and patient, about whom we are sure he felt no common interest.

After Miss Howbiggen's kind inquiries concerning Laura's health, and the expression of her regret that she had been unable to accompany Mr. Lawton to see them, her amiable brother greeted his Blacktarn guest in his usual style of sour banter.

"Well, Mr. Lawton, how go on the improvements that Colonel Renmore, your late 'distinguished guest' (he, he!) was to have given you so much precious advice about? He, he! — ugh, ugh! — he!"

The lord of Blacktarn, regarding our ascetic as a privileged person, smothered the impatience which raillery on so sore a point would have provoked, had it proceeded from any one else, and replied with all his usual solemnity—

"The improvements,—hah! Oh, thank you; they go on very well. And as for the person of whom you speak, and who was your late guest no less than my own,—why, all I can say is, that condemn him as I must, yet I regret he did not turn out to be the person I at first took him for;—ahem!—as it is, I believe, wiser persons than myself would have been taken in."

"To be sure, to be sure!" interposed, seriously, Miss Howbiggen.

"Ya-as, wiser persons than myself would have

been taken in by his superior address and manner. And—ahem !—I may add, I was more willing to make advances towards his acquaintance, from the circumstance—ahem !—of meeting him in such society as your own and Miss Howbiggen's !”

“ The inviting him was her doing,” growled out Mr. Howbiggen, “ not mine !—ugh, ugh, ugh !”

The energy of his “ disclaimer” here brought on a fit of coughing, which having at length subsided, Howbiggen continued, “ I remember, by-the-bye, on the occasion of your meeting him at dinner here, Mr. Lawton, the fellow had the impudence to lay you a bet—he, he, he !—that ‘ Hatfield’ would forge your hieroglyphic of an autograph. To think it was himself all the while that was speaking, and not a soul suspected him !”

Meanwhile, as the cynic was speaking, Mr. Lawton was proceeding, with a solemn smile on his countenance, to take from his pocket a packet containing two letters.

“ What have you there ?” asked Miss Howbiggen, with the laudable curiosity that characterized her.

Mr. Lawton, in reply to the cynic and his sister as well, answered, “ Yes,—ahem !—I do remember the circumstance you mention ; and these letters,” he added, turning to the interesting and

inquiring Hetty, “ will demonstrate with respect to this same bet, that this prince of tricksters not only made it, but has won it !”

“ Is it possible ?” exclaimed Miss Howbiggen ; “ oh, pray let us hear the letters !—I am most curious to hear them !”

“ Ahem !—you shall hear,—you shall hear !—One of them I received by the Cockermouth cross post, and the other is marked with the Nottingham post-mark. The first is from my banker at Cockermouth, and runs thus,—ahem !—

“ SIR,

“ As it is not usual for you to draw upon us for so large an amount as that mentioned in the enclosed draft, after the regular half-yearly sum is drawn out by you, and the books made up, we thought it right to transmit the enclosed to you, in order to learn whether there has been any mistake committed in our honouring it. At the same time, our clerks having not the slightest doubt but that the hand-writing was your own, being so peculiar in its character, they were justified in honouring the cheque. The writing appears certainly, and upon repeated examination, to be yours ; at least we are unable to detect any counterfeit ; but as there are reports that you have become acquainted, together with other gentlemen in the neighbour-

hood, with the notorious Hatfield, under the name of Renmore, our minds misgave us, and we thought we would lose no time in ridding ourselves of an uncertainty so unpleasant. If it should turn out that we are right in suspecting some fraud, no time shall be lost on our part in endeavouring to apprehend the offender.

“ We are, Sir,

“ Your obliged, obedient servants,

“ MARKS AND CO.”

“ Charming!—he, he, he!” chuckled and exclaimed by turns the cynic, to think how “neatly” his poor neighbour of Blacktarn had been duped. “ There can be no uncertainty in the matter,—he, he! Well, now for the other letter—from whom is that pray?—the gentleman himself, perhaps, eh?—candidly acknowledging his dexterity,—he, he, he!”

“ Indeed, you are right!” replied Mr. Lawton, not entering quite so warmly into the spirit of the joke as his “ friend” Howbiggen.

“ Admirable impudence!—he, he!” exclaimed the ascetic, coughing and laughing by turns.

“ Well, I’m sure!” said Miss Howbiggen, turning up the whites of her eyes in interesting amazement.

“ Well, let us hear the letter—the best joke I ever heard in my life!—ugh, ugh, he, ugh, ugh!”

Accordingly, Mr. Lawton, bridling himself up, and putting the best face he could on a matter where he was obliged to acknowledge how completely he had been fooled, proceeded, with an “ahem” or two, to read the following :—

“ MY DEAR SIR,
“ Having left——”

“ ‘ My *dear* Sir !’—Capital !” interrupted Howbiggen. “ Forgive me for interrupting, but I could not for the life of me help it. This Colonel Renmore, or whatever he calls himself, would relieve one from despair even !—he is a very prodigy to excite merriment ! On my word, he eclipses every adventurer I ever heard of yet, for cool impudence and polite address,—eh, Hetty ?—the very Brummell of swindlers !”

Mr. Howbiggen having thus relieved himself of this piece of half comment, half banter, permitted his sage friend Lawton to proceed with the epistle.

“ MY DEAR SIR,
“ Having left the neighbourhood of the lakes under circumstances which doubtless appear embarrassing and against me, and being uncertain whether I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again, I thought it but considerate to address

a line to you; in fact, I write to let you know that, in consequence of a slight 'stake' there was between us, concerning the feasibility of one Mr. Hatfield's conquering the difficulty of imitating your signature, I was induced to avail myself of that gentleman's address in trifles of this kind, to accomplish the object in dispute. Happy am I to inform you that he completely succeeded, making me the winner of the bet, the amount of which (in order to relieve you of the trouble of transmitting it to me, or my bankers) I applied for to Messrs. Marks and Co. of Cockermouth.

" Thinking there was another little affair connected with the rather hardy proceeding of riding off with Miss Lawton, which turned out also a successful bet in my favour, I considered it as well to add the amount of this last transaction to that of the first; so that much unnecessary trouble has been saved, by making one account of the two transactions, which are now entirely settled, by the cheque for £600, which Messrs. Marks obligingly honoured at my hands. With compliments, and best respects to Miss Lawton,

" Believe me,

" My dear Sir,

" Yours very faithfully,

" J. H."

“Why, this is better and better!” exclaimed Mr. Howbiggen, with difficulty having restrained his impatience to pay his due tribute of marvel to the roguish accomplishments of the writer of this epistle.

“Why, what is this new bet?” inquired Miss Howbiggen,—when both herself and her brother were relieved of their curiosity by Lawton’s informing them, with a marvel equal to their own, that the light had now burst in upon him. “Good heavens!” he added, “to think that it was my ‘distinguished guest’ himself that galloped off with the girl!—Ay, he played the same trick, now I remember, in Devonshire, and in Ireland too:—if I had thought of that——”

“If!” interrupted Howbiggen, “—ay, but you did not—here is the art of the fellow, in throwing you off your guard! But let us hear the story of the ‘abduction.’”

Accordingly, Mr. Lawton briefly mentioned the circumstances, with which the reader has been long ago acquainted, and was proceeding to utter a pompous “Jeremiad” on the loss of a fine stack of a new kind of clover, in the fire that took place on the evening of the abduction, and the sowing which had been a favourite experiment of his in agriculture,—when he was mercilessly cut short by Howbiggen, and his attention recalled to the letter.

“ By heavens ! it is the most amusing communication, and most characteristic, too, I ever had the pleasure of hearing—he ! he ! What say you, Hetty, eh ? ”

“ Indeed I rarely remember anything to equal it as a piece of assurance,” replied that judicious and discriminating lady.

“ To rob me, and then venture to write to inform me he has done so !—it is a piece of ‘ assurance’ indeed, or scoundrelism if you please, that has no parallel.”

“ Vastly considerate of him to relieve you of the trouble of sending him the money ! ” observed Mr. Howbiggen, citing the terms of the letter.

“ Ay,” replied Lawton ; “ if he had not paid himself (which he took good care to do), he might have won fifty bets of me, but never should have seen a sixpence in payment.”

“ Nay, there you would be wrong,” rejoined Howbiggen, continuing his somewhat unpalatable banter ; “ for he has fairly won the bets, there can be no doubt.”

“ What !—ahem ! ” exclaimed Lawton, opening wide his eyes in surprise. “ What ! is a bet fairly won which was won through a manœuvre—a *ruse*—against the laws of the land ? ”

“ Of course he has a right to be paid the bet, though you may also have him hanged for the for-

gery—to confine myself to the ‘ fac-simile’ affair of your handwriting.”

“ For shame, Mr. Howbiggen !” interposed the more scrupulous Hetty ; “ this is only arguing for the sake of contradiction.”

“ My dear Sir,” said Lawton, with amusing solemnity, “ you don’t really mean to assert, that if a swindler cajoles me into laying a bet with him, which he is to win by perpetrating a crime, I am bound in honour or justice to pay him ?” and here he opened his eyes, and looked first at Mr. Howbiggen, and then at Hetty.

“ To be sure you are,” replied Howbiggen ; “ the subject of the bet is not the fact of crime, but of counterfeit. The only question is, has the counterfeit been successfully performed or not ? The fact to be hazarded according to the terms of the wager has been accomplished ; whether it wear a criminal complexion or not in the eyes of society does not alter the circumstance of its accomplishment.”

“ My dear Sir,” again iterated the “ astonished” lord of Blacktarn ; while Miss Howbiggen exclaimed—

“ My dear Tobias, how can you persist in maintaining such a position !” and then in an under tone she added to Lawton, “ Never mind what he says, he does not mean it.”

“ But I beg your pardon, I do mean it ! for now,” he continued, turning to Lawton, “ supposing the name to be counterfeited had not been your own, but some third person’s, and you had laid a wager on the circumstance of its counterfeit being a feasibility or not ; well, if the attempt had been successful, and the feasibility proved, you would have been entitled to win had you wagered on that side. The mere question is—the feasibility. Yet more ; even suppose you had laid a wager that a man on the highway would cut a throat the same night—if he does so, you are entitled to win. It matters not that the man deserves hanging for doing so ; or that the subject which the bet regards is abstractedly criminal or not. The feasibility is the only thing to be considered, as far as affects the bet or its claim to validity.”

“ And this is your real opinion ?” asked Lawton, still gaping with surprise.

“ Of course it is ; and any candid reasoner would agree with me. It is consistent with the strictest rules of moral justice, right reason, and logic to boot.”

“ For shame ! for shame !” said Miss Howbiggen ; “ pretty logic, indeed !—you make Mr. Lawton quite angry.”

“ Oh, not at all—not at all !” replied Lawton, endeavouring to maintain his composure as well as

he could, the rubicund hues, meantime, which his choler had flushed his face withal bespeaking how really provoked he was : “ Oh dear no !—never was more cool—more amused in my life !” he added ; “ but I confess I do not admire being quite argued out of my wits,—ahem !”

“ He, he, he !” giggled out his antagonist ; “ but you must be so, I fear, in the present instance, my good friend ; and I think the Jockey Club would side with me.”

“ I know not what the Jockey Club would decide ; but I know which side the law would take,” exclaimed Mr. Lawton.

“ Well ; the gallant ‘ Colonel’ will have law enough, I dare say,” replied Mr. Howbiggen, “ to satisfy all the good folks he has ever exercised his ingenuity upon. At any rate, he has not taken *me* in.”

“ That may be,” observed Lawton ; “ but you may yet live to be his dupe should you ever fall in his way again, or have an opportunity of doing so.”

“ He, he, he !—ugh, ugh !” was the only answer of old Howbiggen, coughing and laughing by turns ; the former affection, however, at length predominating over the last so seriously, that Miss Howbiggen was quite alarmed as she exclaimed, “ What a dreadful fit ! this is worse than ever I remember it.”

Even Lawton, nettled as he had been at the gibes of the cynic at his expense, forgot his impatience, in the concern he now expressed, at witnessing so serious an attack, and withdrew for the present, while Miss Howbiggen, like a careful sister, poured out some "emulgent draught" or other, prepared by her own hands for the invalid.

All, however, she gained by her attention was the following memento, on the part of her cynical brother, on his recovering his power of utterance: "Ay, this accursed cold and cough I have to thank you for. That 'gadding' on the lake, to please you, has done it all. That this cough will be the death of me I am certain. Would to Heaven I had stayed at home and never come (all through your recommendation, mind) to this vile, damp-aired, watery, cough-provoking, tarn-swamped district! I am determined to go back as soon as possible."

"Well, well, my dear Tobias, be easy! You shall go back as soon as you please. I am sure I never recommended your coming here without considering that the beauty of the scenery would be of infinite service in interesting and relieving your mind and spirits. But pray do not blame me for being the cause of the cough."

"There, now, you will only be irritating me, and bringing it on again by contradicting me,"

replied her amiable brother ; so the prudent Hetty was willing for once to give up the argument.

With respect to the impatience now evinced by Mr. Howbiggen to return home, she was not unwilling to humour his proposal to that effect, since the dreams she had fondly indulged in at one time, of possibly “altering her maiden condition,” and adjourning still further north, to the highland neighbourhood of “Clan-renmore,” with a certain gallant colonel, were now all dissipated in empty air ! Never had there been in her experience a more complete *chateau en Espagne* than this “Colonel’s” castle in “Caithness.”

Nay, when she considered how constantly the thought was recurring in the present spot of her abode, how much deceived and duped she and every one else at it had been, the reflection was so little flattering to her self-love that she soon became as warm an advocate for quitting it as her impatient brother could be. It was therefore not many days subsequently to the departure back to Blacktarn of their worthy guest, Mr. Lawton, (who stayed but a very short time with them, anxious as he was to return to his daughter,) that they took their leave of the lake country, Miss Howbiggen declaring “that but for circumstances, their sojourn there would have been delightful.”

Previously to her departure, she had not failed to send repeatedly down to the village, to inquire if any additional tidings had reached it regarding either Hatfield or his ill-fated bride. With respect to the first, she was made acquainted that Mrs. Wetherby had received a letter bearing the very same date as that addressed to Lawton, and inclosing that dame the amount due to her of the thirteen pounds at the dreaded loss of which she had been so sore.

Mike's prediction to her to that effect was verified, to her surprise, much earlier than even he could have supposed. Not only was the amount due inclosed, but a balance over, far exceeding the interest of the sum, as a consideration for its not having been settled sooner.

There was also added in the letter a confirmation of Mike's account of Quandish, which first awakened a doubt in her mind whether she had not indeed been made a dupe by the pseudo-preacher, though it by no means convinced her to that effect; such was the blind confidence and reliance she had been accustomed to place in that saintly hypocrite, and which was difficult to be shaken. There were also in the letter expressions of the deepest affection for her daughter, accompanied by those of the most painful regret; but so

far from softening her feelings either towards the writer or Gertrude, this topic did but lead back the obdurate and prejudiced dame to the condemnation of the man who had instigated her daughter's disobedience.

In occasioning this last result, the letter totally destroyed any whisperings of better consideration for the writer which the disbursement of the thirteen pounds had suggested.

Such were the news concerning Hatfield which came to the ears of Miss Howbiggen. As to the recent village preacher, Quandish, she heard none, but that his late "congregation" had looked for him at the dissenting chapel in vain. We may be permitted to add, that having pursued his enemy with the officers of justice northward as far as Carlisle, he had returned with them, having been taught by that time that their pursuit was hopeless. On their return they took their way through Buttermere, and Quandish had lagged behind, hesitating with himself whether he should pay dame Wetherby a visit and practise on her credulity and misplaced confidence in him, to draw upon her purse.

It was, in fact, during this moment of hesitation and uncertainty that he looked through the casement of the hostelrie, as already described; so that old Mike was not deceived in fancying he had caught a glimpse of this being. The appearance

of the old mariner, however, had discomfited Quandish much more than Mike had, on his part, been discomfited at seeing Quandish ; for this base character well knew that Mike would by this time have exposed his infamy to dame Wetherby, in the course of those discussions which the circumstance of his being the chief pursuer of Hatfield would necessarily occasion.

He therefore, on seeing old Mike, whom of all men he dreaded, shrunk back, and speedily, no less than stealthily, skulked away to join his companions, the officers, on their way onwards towards London. He considered that his " occupation," like Othello's, being gone at Buttermere, and the game, as regarded Mrs. Wetherby's daughter, being up, it would be of little avail for him to remain there as a preacher, since he might preach elsewhere, and pocket more pence in places where the population was larger. Besides, he dreaded the effects of Mike's exposing his character to the duped villagers.

On all these accounts, he deemed it advisable to think no more of Buttermere ; but on the contrary, to look forward with alacrity to adjourning to the metropolis, since that was the scene, he considered, to which an accomplished adventurer, such as Hatfield, was most likely to shift his quarters.

Nay ; this had been the scene on a former occasion of his enterprises ; it was as well, therefore, to look to the chance of tracing him through the mazes of this great arena of human action and human “ expedient,” or knavery, as anywhere else.

Confirmed by the myrmidons of justice, his companions, in this reasoning, he continued his journey with them onwards to the mighty modern Babel.

By a different route, but to the same goal, did our friends Mr. and Miss Howbiggen urge their journey also ; the former dissatisfied with everything, and coughing, grumbling, and muttering discontented musings throughout the whole route. The only circumstance that appeared at all to amuse him was the thought how “ poor Lawton ” had been cozened out of his cash.

This reflection awakened a sour smile on the pale thin lips of the cynic. As for Miss Howbiggen, she had contented herself with having gleaned the latest intelligence that could be obtained of the matters concerning which she had sent to inquire.

With respect to her inquiries concerning the state of Gertrude, as she had not received any answer or information of a more favourable character, it becomes our duty no longer to delay

satisfying the reader's not unkindly curiosity on this subject in at once proceeding to Lorton.

Thither, then, our next chapter calls us, and there Gertrude had been, under the fostering and paternal care of the "good curate," from the period when we last took leave of her.

CHAPTER V.

“ His words disturb’d her soul with pity.

All thoughts, all passions, all regrets ;

Whatever stirs this mortal frame ;

All are but ministers of love,

And feed his sacred flame.

I calm’d her fears, and she was calm.”

COLERIDGE.

IF Mr. Lawton and dame Wetherby had received remembrances from our hero, it may well be imagined that the person who was dearest to his heart would from other and stronger causes not be left without one. Accordingly, after the lapse of little more than a fortnight from the period of the inauspicious nuptials, a letter was delivered by the postman, addressed to the “ Rev. John Fenton.” On opening it, the good curate found a note for himself, accompanied also by a letter for Gertrude. It ran as follows :—

“ MY DEAREST LOVE,

“ I can well imagine the surprise and dismay which the strange and unfortunate occurrences that marked the morning of our nuptials must have occasioned you. Banish the remembrance of them, dearest, from your mind, and confide in the honour, love, and sincerity of one who is devoted to you—of one who is linked to you by all laws, divine and human ; and who is yet more, not only determined to make you ample amends for all you have suffered on his account, but trusts to live with you in honour, security, and happiness.

“ It is impossible for me in the limits of a letter to enter into a full explanation of the cruelty, and injustice, I may add, of which I am the victim. Were you to know more fully than I have heretofore hinted, that my persecution arises from the selfishness and ingratitude of our common bane, Quandish, and, that culpability less really attaches to me than to this basest of human beings, you would, I am confident, acquit me. The benign Mr. Fenton, and the no less benevolent Golefield, would, I am sure, feel for my situation, and make allowances for it.

“ When we meet, be assured there is no single passage in my life that shall not be laid fully and explicitly before you. It will at present gratify you, my dearest Gertrude, to know that I am in

safety and honour, and only wait till I am sufficiently secure in circumstances by the honourable occupation I have been fortunate enough to obtain, to retire with you from out of the reach of my enemies. At present, though I long to see you, to throw myself at your feet, and implore your forgiveness and forbearance for what has passed, yet it is some consolation to me in absence, to feel that in being under Mr. Fenton's roof, you are with one who loves and cherishes you as his own child.

“This consideration relieves me of much uneasiness which would otherwise be occasioned me, under the apprehension lest you might be without that care and attention which I fear you must have required, in consequence of the events of that ill-fated morning when I was forced from you. Forget those painful circumstances, I again adjure you. I repeat, that all that appears at present so much against me shall be removed, and satisfactorily accounted for.

“If ever, my dearest Gertrude, you have seen a shadow of gloom on my countenance, detected heaviness at my heart, and have been able to banish any unpleasant apprehensions these appearances of conscious pain might have occasioned,—if ever, through my assurances, you have looked, once again, on me with confidence, cheerfulness, and

love—do so now ! Now, oh, now, look compassionately on me, when more than ever the thought of your renewed cheerfulness, confidence, and love will assure me in the hopes I have expressed, that we shall ere long meet and yet be happy.”

The note to Mr. Fenton, that accompanied this letter, ran, to a certain extent, in a strain somewhat similar, (as in the nature of things it would,) as far as regards the exculpation of the writer, and his deprecation of the worthy curate’s condemnation of him, in consequence of the fearfully questionable appearances that invested his character. It went on further to thank him, with feelings of the deepest gratitude, for the kindness he had shewn, or should shew to Gertrude.

“ Even were I the greatest reprobate on earth, (the note proceeded to say,) instead of being—as I hope to prove to you one of these days—a most injured and unfortunate man, entrapped and forced into calamities,—even, I say, were I the greatest delinquent on earth, yet, believe me, I loved her with no base or ungenerous design ! My love was returned ; and when our marriage was proposed, it was to rescue her from addresses that were loathsome to her, as indeed you are already aware. To have broken off our union would therefore have rendered her wretched. Consider, then, the struggle I must have endured when any whisperings warned

me to break it off ! At the time our union was first proposed, danger stood aloof from ; me it had been averted.

“ The return of persecution was directed not more against myself than her. No love of justice on the part of my betrayer, no criminality on my part, urged it. No ; it was malice, merely, against myself and her. Had not this persecution been thus maliciously renewed, I had entertained every fair prospect of our retreating to live in security after our marriage ; and even with these encouraging hopes, honour whispered to me to desist from the step we both were anxious to take—nor did the struggle of my love for her, combat these whisperings so much as the thought of her love for me—and the pain that would be occasioned her by my standing aloof from the completion of our mutual hopes and wishes. Compassionate, then, not only the struggles I have endured, but acknowledge with that candour and benevolence that characterize you, how little the persecution I have undergone has arisen from any conscientious motives on the part of my betrayer.

“ I know you will feel for me. I know the kind-hearted Golefield, too, (and to whose benevolence I now also appeal,) will feel for me on all the accounts I have stated. Plead for me, dear Sir, to him. I respect his opinion, and wish to

stand excused by him, next to yourself, above all other men.* Even should these words be unavailing, and you should still turn away from me unconvinced and unforgiving—yet know, I should still revere, respect, and love you. Gertrude can tell you this.

“What secret and unexplained causes I have for thus expressing myself, time will sooner or later disclose. At present, with any unfavourable opinions of me which you might entertain, I should only be embittering your feelings by any such disclosure. This I have not the callousness to do. Believe me, dear Sir, I may be an unfortunate, but never was a bad man. Culpable I may have been, but not naturally depraved; and whatever my destinies may be—however bitter, however unhappy—the world will, I think—I trust—not let my name be utterly condemned.”

“What can he mean?” said Fenton, as he read and re-read the paragraph which expressed so much of feeling—of affection—for himself. A surmise arose in his mind, which was however quickly banished from it, as the words escaped his lips hastily—“Impossible!—impossible!” And then he

* A curious “fact” this in our hero’s history. He shrunk in shame, in this quarter, while in others, he shewed his usual address and assurance. See, too, his letters to the Rev. Mr. Nicholson, as Colonel Hope.

turned his attention to the consolation which he thought might be afforded poor Gertrude from both the communications received. In his usual bland and forgiving manner, he endeavoured to assure her mind and strengthen her hope, "that all might yet be explained, all might yet be happier than past appearances had warranted—that the best of us suffer sometimes under adverse circumstances, and are unable to make good our assurances of uprightness, in the face of suspicion, prejudice, and persecution!"

These words were not without their effect, and by the kindness of Fenton, she gradually rallied from the severe shock she had sustained. The vigour of youth, buoyant and fresh as her native mountain breezes, upheld her, and aided her progress towards recruit. The resources of her constitution supplied their means of restitution and health, even as the pure salient springs that feed and nourish the thirsty summer valleys. Her heart had not yet arrived, either, at that bitter experience which betokens, by its sinking, that it knows all hope is crushed, and that to rally is but a bootless struggle.

Her confiding spirit turned with willingness to her *husband's* (for such he was) remonstrances; her love pictured him speaking, nor could she turn a deaf ear to the voice. Her heart strongly aided

the effort towards consoling her, afforded by the kind representations of Fenton.

It was thus he reasoned with himself, in offering them to her:—"At any rate," he considered, "if any fearful truth comes to light which may exhibit eventually the most disastrous consequences as regards her husband, yet it is of little avail to anticipate the misery she must then feel. Let her receive consolation and respite if she may, and while she may; let her raise the head and smile through a brief day of hope, if brief indeed it is doomed to be. If the danger and guilt that haunt his path shall be cleared off, and his hopes be realized of escaping to live with her in security, why, I shall have been glad, in that event, that I did not occasion her any unnecessary state of previous suffering. No, no; pain sways too much, in this state of probation—life! Let us snatch a respite from it while we may."

Such were the benign considerations that influenced Fenton's efforts in restoring Gertrude's peace of mind; nor were his efforts, truly paternal as they were, without effect; and with her peace of mind and improved state of spirits, her health and vigour of frame were also gradually amended. Love and hope, too, secretly glowed in her bosom, and forbade her to despond.

With respect to Fenton's feelings as regarded

her husband, there was something in that person that had engaged the good curate more than ordinarily. There was a deference, an affection, in Hatfield's manner towards him, that had interested him in his behalf, with almost a paternal feeling, he knew not why. There was a respectful tenderness in his manner, beyond that of any mere ordinary wish to please, or the mere address of common courtesy.

This impression in Fenton's mind, together with the expressions in the letter addressed to him, occasioned him, when he called them into consideration, and thought of them together, a certain degree of curiosity and surmise, as we have already witnessed, that were inexplicable to him. He could not, we repeat, help feeling a strong interest for Hatfield, whatever might be the circumstances in which he was placed; and while he studied to soothe Gertrude in suggesting the hope that all might yet be happy, he spoke no less the secret wishes of his own heart.

Scarcely less than himself was the benevolent bard Golefield interested for Gertrude; nor had he been forgetful, since his return to Keswick, of the kind declaration we remember his making to Woodsland, whom he had left at Grasmere, of coming to Lorton and offering what "spirit-balm" he might to the ill-fated bride. Her beauty, and

the vexatious importunities she had been constrained to fly from, to the alliance she had made, strongly interested his feelings in her behalf.

“No wonder,” he would say, “she should have been glad to marry a person of the appearance, address, and amiability, too, of Hatfield. Poor girl! Well, I’ll just step in and see my worthy neighbour Fenton, and take a turn with him up and down the lawn in front of the parsonage house, or near my favourite ‘Lorton* yew,’ which might have inspired Young with grand and gloomy associations, enough for another ‘Night Thoughts.’”

So saying, would the bard, since we last met him, often step aside as he passed (which he frequently did) through the village of Lorton, in those romantic wanderings which it was his pleasure to pursue through the wilds around. And the good curate was not permitted to want a coadjutor in his endeavours to win his lovely ward (for so he considered her) back to the recovery of her wonted peace of mind. On the present occasion, Fenton shewed his friend the letters received from Hatfield, and asked him what he thought of them.

Golefield read them, and after musing, he shook his head, as he replied, when Gertrude left the room—

* See note, *supra*, vol. ii. p. 289.

“I fear there is too much mystery and too little explicitness, too much of profession, (however plausible and sanguine its expression,) ever to let us believe that all can be cleared away as we could wish. However, I no less sincerely wish it may be. For if ever man was formed to engage the interest and esteem of society on his side, as far as social bearing goes, it is this man. I doubly hope he may be safe yet, both for his own and the poor ‘Beauty’s’ sake ; but——”

“But what?” asked Fenton, seeing there was something of hesitation in the bard’s manner.

“Why, you are aware of what old Mike says,” continued Golefield, as he walked out on the lawn, accompanied by the curate.

“No ; besides, who does not know Mike’s superstitious character ? He is never without some omen or fable. He is a sort of walking ‘destiny’ in the neighbourhood !”

“Ay, I believe Mike may be a little superstitious, like the rest of his sea-fraternity ; but it certainly has struck me as singular, his applying (for I could not mistake the significance of his manner) the tale of the Egyptian and the child at sea to Hatfield. Routhmore and myself heard the tale one day at the old man’s cell.”

“Yes, yes,—I have heard it.”

“And when we remarked how increased its sin-

gularity and interest would be, had it applied to Hatfield, the old man made no reply, except that of a significant look, which we interpreted as intending to say that the child was no other than Hatfield himself."

"Indeed, it is a singular story that, both as to the circumstance of the child being stolen from its parents, as well as the subsequent events it contains. You give it a new complexion in applying it to Hatfield. It seems, in its augury of ill, to partake much of the character of that singular prediction addressed by the gipsy to Dr. Dodd; though Mike's fancy has rendered his tale of ill-augury more interesting from the decorations he has given it."

Fenton spoke with a seeming air of indifference, but yet certain circumstances secretly awakened in his mind surmises of some "strange coincidence," of which he was now, for the first time, made sensible. He, however, was ashamed to be observed to betray anything like emotion, where it was his duty, as a Christian pastor and thinker, to check all superstitious conclusions, and repel either the doctrines of casualty or destiny, as contravening the regular course of heavenly dispensations. Accordingly, with an effort to regain his composure, he asked—

"And what became of the child subsequently

to the events of this story? for it was conveyed back to its parents, certainly, after this earlier loss of it, according to Mike."

"Was it indeed! do you know that?—" asked Golefield.

"I suppose so," said Fenton, hesitatingly. "In fact, Mike's account says so."

"True, true!"

"But what was its subsequent history?"

"I know not; whatever it was, however, I believe old Mike kept his eye on the child, marking every step it took on life's way, as following the track its destinies (as the old mariner will have it) pointed out. It was 'doomed,' he says, to desert the safeguard of its home, in its progress towards its inevitable end."

"Desert its home, said you?" observed Fenton, turning suddenly to Golefield, as a momentary paleness overspread his cheek, and the words "singular coincidence" escaped his lips, as well as Golefield's ear could distinguish their purport.

"What was it you remarked?" asked Golefield.

"Oh, nothing — only — there were circumstances that suggested to me a singular coincidence with those of Mike's story; but that son died," he added to himself, "there can scarcely be a doubt."

Golefield did not catch the purport of this last remark, but merely observed generally—

“Ay, ay! those ‘strange coincidences’ are, be assured, something more than mere casualties, and I could say much——”

But here the conversation was broken in upon by the not unwelcome occasion of the entrance of Dr. Esdaile, who had been as unremitting in his medical attendance on Gertrude as on the heiress of Blacktarn. He advanced to the lawn followed by Bryan, and having greeted the good curate and his companion, inquired after his fair patient.

“Better, eh?—ah, that is right! I’m glad to hear it,” he said, as Fenton answered in the affirmative; “but here she is,” he added, “to speak for herself!”

Gertrude now met them in her progress towards the house, as the gravel-walk she had been pursuing brought her to that point of the lawn where they were conversing. But there was one of the party that, not content with seeing her approach, ran forward to meet her with every manifestation of joy.

This was Bryan, who, though “dumb animal” he might be called, certainly proved he had a voice, in the gladsome salutation with which he barked forth his pleasure, at seeing one to whom he had been indebted for many a bone and many a meal, when his master had stopped at the Travel-

lers' Rest, to recruit himself when weary with any fishing excursion that might have taken him to the waters of Buttermere. It was now some little time since honest Bryan had been gladdened with a sight of his friend Gertrude, and the gambols and clamorous joy of the poor animal served somewhat to amuse her to whom they were addressed, and relieve her of a certain degree of the embarrassment of which she felt slightly conscious, at thus unexpectedly meeting the three gentlemen before her.

Esdaile greeted his lovely patient with his usual kindness of manner, as he took her hand and expressed his pleasure at seeing her "so much improved:" so he was willing to say, being always glad to make his patients fancy they were somewhat better than they were, since he considered this was a step towards making them better in reality.

This principle he was ready to enforce by many amusing and instructive anecdotes, professional and miscellaneous, but which our limits do not permit us to relate.

"We shall do very well," he continued to his patient; "very well indeed! only keep up your spirits, for it is a rule with me to instruct all my patients to 'laugh at cares, crosses, and contradictions,' as the best remedy for them; a better

than all that the Pharmacopœia could furnish. 'Hope for the best' is also another maxim that in itself is a 'regimen' worth a whole twelve months' resort to 'strengthening draughts.'"

In spite of the good-humoured style of the lively little Doctor, a tear stole involuntarily into Gertrude's eye, at some painful thoughts that intruded. This she endeavoured to check, as she brushed it away, while she thanked the physician for the encouragement with which he addressed her, expressing that she certainly felt herself better. Her attention, however, was called away by Bryan, who jumped upon her, and reiterated his barkings of salutation; nor was she sorry to make her retreat into the house, under the excuse "of giving poor Bryan something;" since she felt that, however kindly disposed towards her the persons were, before whom she stood, yet that they were but mementos in her presence of the painful circumstances in which she was placed.

After she had withdrawn, Esdaile turned again to his companions on the lawn; and as he expressed how much pleasure it gave him to see his fair patient better, Fenton remarked, "It has in no small degree given her hope and encouragement, that she has received a letter from her ill-fated husband, which is calculated to give her confidence on his account, and inspire a hope that he may yet

prove himself more worthy of her than appearances as yet have shewn ;—nay, read this letter, where he describes himself as actually having obtained some post or office of ‘honour.’ ”

And, accordingly, he placed Hatfield’s letter to that effect in Esdaile’s hands, who, on having read it, observed, it was singular if such were the case.

“ And yet,” he continued, after a pause, “ I am not much surprised at the circumstance, when I call to mind, not only the talent of the man, but his extremely superior address and bearing, which are so calculated to inspire confidence that they must mainly contribute to make any application for employment successful. Certainly, I should never suspect him, from his manner and bearing, of dishonour.”

“ I judge a great deal,” observed Golefield, “ by men’s countenances, as to what their characters are, and——”

“ Do you ?” interrupted Fenton, smiling ; “ you follow a very fallacious guide. How many, for instance, are there, that under distress or harassment of mind, and the effect of nervous disorder, change countenance and betray confusion, not from any sense of guilt, but an apprehension that their jaded aspect may make them appear objects of suspicion.”

“ True,” replied Esdaile, “ I have witnessed in

the course of my practice many instances of this kind. In fact, the consciousness of our appearance being pleasing or ungainly in the eyes of others, often influences both manner and mind, character and disposition. The self-complacency, then, that Hatfield might have felt, from the consciousness of appearing pleasing to other people, might have given him that happy character of countenance he possesses. So, on the other hand, the consciousness of deformity, and that we are unpleasant in the eyes of others, makes us crabbed, and influences both countenance and character in a less happy way."

"Yes, yes," observed Golefield; "but the remark I made, as to judging of men's characters by their countenance, I was about to qualify, as far as regards the instance of Hatfield; for I was about to say, that I should never have imagined from his countenance—all frankness and openness as it is—that his character was sinister or deceitful. For though, indeed, it might be his object to wear a frank exterior, the better to cloak his secret design, yet in a man naturally deceitful, it would be imagined that his countenance would at times betray his character, and the bias of his disposition; but it was never so with Hatfield; which leads me to the conclusion," added the philosopher, "that he was not naturally a base or treacherous character,

but has fallen originally into some dreadful accident, to extricate himself from which, an unguarded and extraordinary attempt (a guilty one, I fear) was resorted to. But how many are entrapped into a course of life to which their natural inclinations are repugnant."

"Certainly this result is bitterly witnessed in the instance of the other sex," observed Esdaile; "where the world shuts the door of repentance and reclaim against unfortunates not naturally libertine; and I am really inclined to agree with you that Hatfield was not naturally base, but the victim originally of some bitter and compulsory necessity; though I do not mean, on any account, to say that however misfortune may have harassed and driven him to extremity, he ought not to have resisted any baleful temptation."

"Certainly he ought," said the curate, sorrowfully; "but it is, as you say, hard at all times, in the difficult situations in which men are placed, to fight against the enemy that is everlastingly on the watch for his prey—the soul! And then flesh is so frail, and circumstance so pressing—so bitter."

"The natural bias," observed Golefield, continuing his argument, "is still indicated by the physiognomy, if you scan it aright, however, much habit may have shaped the character into a course opposite to the indication it bespeaks. The natu-

rally evil propensities of Socrates were betokened in his countenance, though he had subdued them by philosophy ; so Hatfield's natural propensities might have been, on the other hand, good, as his countenance would indicate, however it might have happened that misfortune, circumstance, necessity, have warped them towards crime ; at least, I should wish to believe so ; though still the old adage, *fronti nulla fides*, has often much truth in it."

"Would," said the good curate, feelingly, "that the person you speak of, living as he does at this day, when we are blessed with the light of Christianity, could have resisted temptation as that exemplary heathen sage did, whom you have instanced."

"At any rate," said Dr. Esdaile, "it shews great presence of mind, and a confidence almost heroic, in this singular being, that he can walk thus as we have witnessed him, on the extreme verge as it were, where life and death meet, with so dreadful an uncertainty of fate, yet with a calm that would do honour to Socrates himself."

"Assuredly his fortitude is singular," observed Fenton. "I grieve it should not have arisen from those pure motives which religious principles inspire ; they would have saved him from the fearful contingencies that have since befallen him."

So spoke the good curate, as they arrived at

the little wicket that opened from the garden of the parsonage, upon the village road. Here Esdaile proceeded to take his leave of Golefield and the curate, though the latter pressed him much to stay and dine with them. But the physician first informed them of a piece of intelligence they were almost sorry to hear, since it signified to them that he was about to leave the neighbourhood, though it imparted to them at the same time, and much to their pleasure, the advancement of their friend in his profession and practice.

In fact, the worthy Doctor had received a letter requesting his attendance in the metropolis, on a noble valetudinarian, whose case he had successfully treated some time before, and who, having experienced a relapse, was desirous of again seeking the assistance of Doctor Esdaile.

This invitation held out too many prospects of advantage to be declined; though it was with great regret that the Doctor looked forward to the contingency of being obliged to remove altogether from his present quarters, except, perhaps, on the occasion of a visit at certain intervals. He was therefore obliged to lose no time, previously to his departure, in visiting his numerous patients in the neighbouring district, and setting them upon such a course of regimen as would be available, during his unavoidable absence from them.

Cordially, then, did Fenton and Golefield take leave of the kind-hearted and esteemed physician, who having left every necessary recommendation for the treatment of Gertrude, bade them farewell, followed now by Bryan, who by this time had sought out his master again, and forthwith trotted by the side of the vehicle that conveyed the physician from the parsonage.

CHAPTER VI.

“*Falstaff*. At a word ; hang no more about me. I am no gibbet for you.”

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

A PERIOD of some weeks had elapsed since the date of our preceding chapter, and the scene of our story now calls us to the metropolis, whither many of our “*dramatis personæ*” have preceded us.

It was amidst the maze of the great Babel that an elderly gentleman was proceeding along the street, muffled up in the wrappings of coat, “upper benjamin,” and spenser ; a dress as much in favour at the period now in view as a mackintosh, a blouze, or a cloak may be at the present day. More particularly was his neck enveloped in the huge folds of a handkerchief, or rather “bale” of green silk.

He slouched in his gait very much, poking his

head forwards, and having his arms flung listlessly behind him, where his hands were clasped in each other, except when a fit of coughing, that occasionally surprised him, compelled him to raise one of them up to his chest, which he did to relieve the strain it sustained in coughing.

“Ugh—well, thank Heaven at any rate that I am back again in town !” he ejaculated to himself. “Hope I may get rid of this intolerable cough—” here a fit seized him, forcing the tears from his eyes and the tongue out of his mouth for a minute or two ; on its subsiding, he continued, as he panted for breath—“Oh Lord ! oh dear !—terrible plague !—serious this, upon my word ; however, I trust I may get better. I am always better in town. I was quite sick of those vile lakes and tarns, and have been rejoicing over my escape from them ever since I left them.”

Just here the bell of the postman struck up behind the unfortunate gentleman, as if to check his self-gratulations on his return to town, by the clamour it rung in his ears ; while that of a muffin-vender raised an emulative chime just before him ; yet more to swell the chorus of discord, the dustman roared and rang by turns, at the side of the pavement ; and a moment after, as if to carry the climax of din to its most obstreperous pitch, a dozen newsmen’s horns, trumpeting forth their

challenge to the world in behalf of so many rival journals, overwhelmed our luckless peripatetic, and occasioned him soon to recant his praise of town, and his self-gratulations on his return to it.

In fact, the nuisance of the last-mentioned stentors and trumpeters was so great that it was obliged to be silenced by the interdict of Parliament. No wonder it increased the nervous irritation of the gentleman before us, who was not of the most patient temperament, and in whom the reader will have no difficulty in recognising our ascetic acquaintance, Mr. Howbiggen, who, it will be remembered, had come away from the lake country as much an invalid as he found it, with the addition of the cough, which he had continued to complain of, more especially, since the eventful day of the regatta on Derwentwater.

This cough was what is vulgarly termed, “a church-yard cough,” and still obstinately harassed our valetudinarian, whose tide of vexation now flowed apace, as his impatience gave way under the accumulation of London nuisances that were so rifely assailing him.

“Oh good heavens!—what a pest!—where does a man meet with such a multiplicity—such a complication of nuisances, as in this odious—” here his voice was again drowned—“I wish I were once more out of town, — anywhere but in London.”

Again another peal of clamour drowned his unhappy ejaculations; and, in fact, after having scuffled, rather than walked, down two or three streets, to place himself beyond the reach of the din, he at length effected his object, so far as to be able to hear the sound of his own voice, as he now gratified his impatience in expatiating on the annoyances of "town."

"A man can't stop to look at his watch in the street, but there is sure to be a mob collected round him. First one booby stands gaping, then another oaf, then another,—a pickpocket, ten to one; and at last you form the nucleus of a knot of villany which is nothing more nor less than a machine of pocket-picking—an 'infernal machine,' that scatters about mischief on every one who comes within its sphere!—umph!—ugh!—umph!—detestable this. I thought a moment or two ago I was better back in town; but I declare I would rather be back at those odious tarns again, than endure annoyance such as this, though the residence there was a pest on many accounts; what with that metaphysical dreamer that would mystify even a mustard-pot, rather than speak plainly of it," (here was a fling at Golefield,) "and what with that rash-brained, yet pompous noodle, Lawton, with his hundred and one improvements—pity he did'nt improve himself. And to wind up the whole

catalogue of them, there was the arch adventurer, or impostor, Hatfield—though, by-the-bye, he was the best of the set.”

These words did not escape the speaker so inaudibly, it should appear, as not to be overheard by a Jewish looking person who walked about the town, with his tray-full of wares, in capacity of pencil and trinket hawker.

What interest the words which he had heard Howbiggen mutter to himself could awaken in him, we are unable to conjecture; but be this as it may, he immediately rivetted his keen eye on the dyspeptic gentleman, and seemed to recognise him, though he must himself have been utterly unknown to Howbiggen. Accordingly, our Jew hawker offered his pencils to the cynic, as he said—

“Only von shilling and shixpesh the bundle—fine article—fine article!”

“Don’t want ’em,” replied Howbiggen, bustling by, with a hope of passing beyond the reach of further importunity. The Israelite was still, however, pertinacious, and was by no means one of those gentry that understand taking “No” for an answer.

“Vell, then,” he continued, hurrying along by the side of Howbiggen, till he fairly overtook him, and looked him in the face; “vell, then, only von shilling.”

“ I tell you, I don’t want your pencils,—I don’t want ’em,” repeated Howbiggen, with increased testiness of tone.

“ Only shixpensch, then ; all these beautiful penshilsh for only von shixpensch ! Vy, itsh monshtrous sheap !”

“ If you would give me your whole tray-full, with all its trash, I wouldn’t give you a farthing !” said Howbiggen, much irritated ; and being now alarmed for his pockets, he accelerated his pace as well as he could.

The Jew, however, was inexorable ; he would not quit Howbiggen’s side. “ If you would but try ’em,” he said in a tone of supplication for which the Jews have been famous, it is said, ever since the Babylonish captivity and their acquaintance with Nebuchadnezzar ; “ if you would but try ’em—”

“ Would but—but I will not !” half roared and half screamed Howbiggen ; his impatience being at length urged past all bounds of control. “ Get about your business, or I will send for a constable ! the fellow has the unbelief of the whole ten tribes of Israel ! A scoundrel ! pestering one in this manner !”

The Jew, seeing that he had to deal with one who was as stubborn as the most “ stiff-necked” even of his own race, was willing at length to relax

his importunities ; and after muttering, “ Shush a bargain you never get again,” he retired, but took care to keep his desired customer in view. In fact, he watched Howbiggen until this ill-used gentleman had reached the door of his residence ; where, having scrutinized the number, the Jew took his leave. He marked the house, indeed, as carefully as ever bailiff did that of an unlucky wight amenable to arrest, while he is ready to pounce on his prey, should the outgoings of the latter lead him from the door.

Howbiggen, when seated in his arm chair, of course indemnified himself as well as he could for the various annoyances of London which he had just suffered, by venting his discontent at them unrestrainedly.

On the other hand, Miss Howbiggen, willing to cheer him, and also desirous of keeping him as well as she could in good humour, with a view to inducing him to enter into her social schemes as now about to be propounded, thus replied in a conciliatory tone.

“ Well ! I must say there are many annoyances in town ; they are also felt more after having just returned from the quiet of the country. You will find yourself less worried with the distraction, din, and noise, after you have again become inured to them. Meantime, my dear Tobias, London has

its pleasures ; and I promise myself, and you too, the prospect of much pleasure, from the various little parties we shall be going to,—for see, our friends have not forgotten us.”

“ Oh Lord ! I wish they had !” was the amiable reply of “ dear Tobias,” as he looked with an aspect of verjuice at the large japan tray covered with cards of invitation, to which his party-loving sister directed his attention.

This lady continued speaking of the “ friends” she had mentioned, as she said—“ They had no sooner heard that we had arrived in town than all these kind testimonials of remembrance, and of their pleasure, also, at the prospect of seeing us again, were received. We shall have a very nice party to-morrow evening, I hope,” added Miss Howbiggen, not wishing to anticipate any objection on the part of her brother to attending the party on which she had set her heart.

“ ‘ *We* shall have,’ say you, Miss Howbiggen ? You may go, if you please. As for me, I am in no condition to go out. I had hoped, now I had returned to my own house here in town, to be master of myself and my own movements. But no ! it seems a man is a prey for his ‘ friends,’ as they are called,—who pounce on his privacy, and even infirmity, and tear him to pieces, one dragging him one way, and another, another.”

“ Oh gracious! gracious!” said Miss Howbiggen to herself as she raised her eyes to the ceiling. “ Well, then,” she added to her brother, “ you can stay at home if you please ; and——”

“ And you would go and leave me here with this bad cough, to die off as heaven might seem fit, while you were sunning yourself in the gay atmosphere of these parties—endless parties ! I am much obliged to you, Miss Howbiggen.”

“ My dear Tobias, do not be so unreasonable—I might add, so selfish. I’m sure I have never been wanting in attention to you ; but would you have us both live entirely secluded—ay, and *excluded*, too, from the world, and lose all our acquaintance? for such will be the case, if we do not accept an invitation or two. And then you would, on the other hand, complain of the solitude——”

“ Not I!—not I!” interrupted Howbiggen, hastily ; “ I had rather be alone—much rather.”

“ Yes, I maintain you would complain of solitude,” continued Hetty ; “ and well you might ; for to be unhinged from any link of society or communication with the world, in such a place as London, in the midst of all the din, clatter, and intercourse of life, is the most melancholy solitude and state of endurance in the world !”

“ Pooh, pooh ! you speak from a mere love of

gadding here, and there, and everywhere," muttered Howbiggen to himself.

"Now here is our old friend Lord Balderton, who really will be offended, and justly, if we do not look in at Lady Balderton's *soirée*. Lady Balderton's grandmother was a cousin of my great aunt, and——"

"How many hundred times removed? ha, ha, ha!" rudely replied the "dear Tobias." "This cousinship, how you stick to it, in order to keep up an acquaintance with people you fancy *comme il faut*. Do drop that silly old story about the cousinship; and I will compound with you for going to Lady Balderton's, if you will, further, give up half the invitations in the tray?"

"Very well, you shall have your way!"

"Here! let me look at the cards," he said, taking the tray most unceremoniously from the fair hand of Hetty, and looking at the cards one by one. "Ugh!—who's card is this?—big enough for a South-sea-bubble placard! 'Sir Giles and Lady Skinner request the honour, &c., &c.,'—umph!—Sir Giles is a rank Jacobin, and his wife a French emigrant's daughter. I don't care one fig about Sir Giles and his Lady. One meets a set of old broken-down French marquisses and counts,—why, my pedigree has more nobility in it than all of theirs put together—umph! ugh!"

So saying, he was going to fling the card into the fire, when Miss Howbiggen with laudable anxiety arrested his arm in the nefarious deed, as she exclaimed, "No, no ! I like Lady Skinner very much."

"Why, you can't converse with her after all, except in a bald patchwork of French that is ridiculous."

"Well, never mind ; she is a very 'good acquaintance' for all that."

"Oh, my poor sister, how very vain you are ! why, gracious, you don't value people surely for any trumpery 'title' they may have ? If you do, you may cringe to the merest plebeians in the world—fellows that the other day were grubbing for gold in the mud of the stock-exchange,—(a sordid grovelling crowd of usurers, bankers, and stock-jobbers,)—and have raised the brow from the scrivener's desk to shrine it perhaps in a coronet. The hands that yesterday were hard and brown under the discipline of city moil, and city sordidness, are to-day raised rampant and encrimsoned in the proud and sanguined badge of baronetcy. Lord ! we have the merest set of mushrooms imaginable disfiguring our circles of rank at the present day. It makes me quite sick to contemplate it."

"Dear, dear, how you talk !" exclaimed Miss

Howbiggen, after her brother had delivered himself of this testy diatribe. "I'm sure I do not desire to run after people merely because they exhibit the empty boast of 'title,' which, as you justly observed, is at present very much disparaged and tarnished, no doubt. I am not so weak or 'vain,' begging your pardon, as to do so; but surely I may be excused liking agreeable persons, although they may chance to be stars in the red book. Nay, let me add, that you—yes, you yourself—have a good deal encouraged my aristocratic notions, if, indeed, I possess any."

"Aristocratic fiddlestick! I never encouraged any such notions! I despise the greater part of mankind, patrician or plebeian."

"I beg your pardon, you are always (when any clue is given to the topic) boasting of your old family and pedigree."

"Boasting! ha, ha! you amuse me. I never boasted about the matter!—I might have stated the plain fact."

And here she was about to reply again, when her attention was suddenly called to the blaze that flashed up from the grate, being the funeral-fire of at least three dozen cards, which were flung into it by the unrelenting scorner of "evening entertainments" and "morning calls."

"Why you have burnt the cards of five coun-

tesses, two knights of the Bath, one duke, and fifteen as excellent and respectable people—ay, and of as good family and pretensions as even you, with all your pride (though you will not avow it,) could have desired. What are you about, Mr. Howbiggen?”

“Why, there are cards upon cards in the tray yet,—enough to satisfy the most inveterate ‘gadder out’ in the world. I wish the people whose names figure on those cards had spared their invitations, and I might then have spared you this terrible shock of tossing a score of cards into the fire.”

And he grinned a sardonic grin, as he spoke, and looked wistfully at the tray, as if he desired to toss the whole remainder of its contents into the fire. His look was like that of an old baboon’s bent on mischief.

Miss Howbiggen, however, with laudable anxiety, took care to hold the tray out of his reach, as she exclaimed in an accent of concern—“You have actually burnt the cards of some of our most desirable acquaintance. Provoking! I shall forget where we are expected, and we shall offend everybody, while we lose all our acquaintance. Vexatious!”

“No, no! only half!” chuckled out Mr. Howbiggen. “You have plenty of cards, I am sure, left in the tray; and as for those I have burnt,

never mind them, but console yourself for their loss in the possession of those that remain—he, he ! Besides, I thought you had expressed yourself contented with looking forward to going to your ‘cousin’s,’—he, he, he !—Lady Balderton’s.”

But here a fit of coughing checked the tide of fretful raillery, and prevented any further bickering on the subject, between “dear Tobias” and his amiable sister Hetty. She, excellent and sociably disposed lady, was obliged to console herself as best she might, with the prospect of, at any rate, not being crossed or contradicted in going to Lady Balderton’s *soirée*.

So with this hope she left the cynic coughing and grumbling in his arm-chair ; nor did he forget amongst other fretful topics that employed his musings, to mutter forth his dudgeon, on the score of the Jew hawker’s impertinent importunity.

“The scoundrel !” he ejaculated ; “I firmly believe he must have had some design on my pocket, or, perhaps, was dogging me home with a view to robbing the house. It is not unlikely, for I verily believe I saw the fellow on the opposite side of the street as I entered, watching me, evidently with some scoundrelly design !—umph !—ugh !—pest !—plague !—nuisance !—nest of villains this London.”

CHAPTER VII.
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“ Let the earth hide thee ;
Thy bones are marrowless,—thy blood is cold,—
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with.”

MACBETH.

WE have our misgivings no less than Mr. Howbiggen, as to the Jew who had dogged his path so pertinaciously ; but as we see little prospect at present of gratifying our curiosity relative to this hawking Israelite, we must content ourselves with directing our attention to the movements of another knave, for whose “whereabout” we must now look in London. In a word, we are interested in inquiring whether Quandish, who had by this time arrived in the metropolis, had made any successful steps towards detecting, in the mazes of the great labyrinth of London, the person for whom he was so anxiously in search.

That person, from his own account in the letter to Gertrude given in a preceding chapter, had represented himself as being employed in an honourable occupation ; though where he was situate, or what the nature of his duties were, he did not permit to transpire. Lost, then, as we are in doubt and uncertainty, not only as to his present situation, but where to look for him, we cannot pursue a more probable plan of tracing him out than by following the footsteps of Quandish or Simmonds, who, houndlike, kept up the chase after the prey for whose blood he thirsted.

Knowing how familiar to Hatfield all the ways and contrivances of living in London were, his enemy had arrived at no unreasonable conclusion, that having failed in tracing his flight northward, it was not improbable he might chance to find him lurking in the metropolis, which was a centre point whither Hatfield had previously turned with success, when his resources elsewhere had failed.

London and Dublin, indeed, had been his most successful, and therefore favourite, scenes of action ; but as he had been too recently discomfited at the Irish metropolis, Quandish felt little doubt that he was once again in his “ old haunts ” in the British city.

On his entrance, accordingly, into London, he was minute in describing and inquiring for the

person he wanted, at all the places of public resort where it was at all likely Hatfield could have stopped on his arrival in town ; his inquiries being instituted in the direction in which Hatfield would have entered it—from the Northern avenues. No satisfactory intelligence, however, could he gain.

Nevertheless, this ill success, so far from making him flag in his pursuit, rather instigated him to a vigilance and perseverance yet more unremitting. Not content with personal inquiries, he advertised the reward he had placarded about in the north. There was not a public journal in which it did not appear ; but without any tidings being gleaned of its object.

As he was conning over one of these advertisements, it occurred to him that Hatfield had, as an expedient, engaged himself on former occasions of living by his wits in London as a contributor to a public journal ; nay, he had been admitted as joint editor in one journal in particular, which interested itself on questions of Irish internal policy, and in illustrating which, Hatfield's acquaintance with Ireland had enabled him to be of much service.

“ May he not now,” pondered the ex-preacher, “ have resorted to this method of supporting himself, as it affords especial opportunities for concealment ?”

The moment this thought struck Quandish, a

ray of satisfaction lit up his malign and brooding countenance. It appeared to him now as if a certain clue was afforded him of arriving at some discovery of his wished-for victim. Flinging aside, then, the paper he was perusing, away he hastened to the office of the journal in question, concerning whose conduct, management, and editorship, he was now so curious to glean intelligence. To afford this, however, was no business of the clerks and minor superintendents in the office of its public delivery, and the answers he received were very short. He was informed generally that there were several editors.

Accordingly, he left the office, but took care to watch patiently, to see where the letters and communications to the different editors were conveyed; his spies following the bearers in all directions, and reporting to him the character of the place or residence where the packets were delivered.

The reason is obvious of his wishing to learn the character of the peculiar spot where any of these communications were taken; for if it should be marked by any circumstances of secrecy, or particular privacy, his suspicions would derive confirmation, and his pursuit be encouraged to proceed with increased alacrity.

His hopes of some such result as this being afforded his inquiry were not altogether disap-

pointed. He heard that in one instance a boy with communications had been followed to a very desolate habitation, where he merely put the letters through an aperture in the door, made for that purpose. To this spot he determined on directing his instant inquiries; and on repairing thither, he found no trace of any one living there. "Some one," he thought, "must come to this desolate spot to take the letters that are delivered here, however deserted it may be in itself—however little any one may stay or reside here."

The door before which he stood was that of a room near one of the "inns of court," at the top of a narrow, crazy staircase.

It was towards dark when he went, at a period when he conjectured it was most probable that a person wishing to preserve concealment, or pass under disguise, would call for letters and communications. He was not mistaken; for after waiting for some little time in a nook of the recess formed by the landing-place, he perceived an old woman come up the stairs, and after having unlocked the door, disburden a box, (something like an alms' box for the poor,) fixed to the inside of it, and which contained the papers thrust through the aperture from without.

After doing this, she appeared to have performed the extent of her commission, for she did not even

enter the room or rooms (whichever might be the case) to perform any domestic duties, and which might indicate that any one led his miserable existence on this spot. Her only object, or duty, seemed to be to carry away the contents of the box.

Quandish immediately felt a strong curiosity to follow her. He thought he might even address her; and accordingly inquired "who lived on the spot, or to whom the room belonged?" She, however, said she was merely employed on "an errand" in the present instance, and could not satisfy him. So he asked her no more questions, but letting her proceed, followed her as closely as he conveniently might; not, however, without perceiving that she occasionally looked back, as if to see whether she was watched.

This circumstance immediately suggested to him that there must be some object of concealment, and that the ignorance of the woman when questioned was merely assumed; or why should she, if unconscious of any circumstances requiring secrecy, exhibit herself anxious, or, as he termed it, "fidgety," about being looked after. All these circumstances tended to confirm his suspicions that he was on "the right scent;" and so keenly in the present instance was he led on by it, that he tracked the old beldame under favour of

the gloom, till he saw her turn the corner of an obscure and murky court, black as the jaws of Orcus itself.

Down this she proceeded, and stopped at a miserable tenement, where a number of dirty Irish labourers, with women and children, were sitting on the steps in front of the door. This bevy of ragged Patlanders was occupied in drinking, and clamouring forth a strange wild Irish howl, in the genuine Milesian tongue.

He passed by these tatterdemalions without taking any notice of them, as if his business had been to call on some one in the house, and proceeded up the staircase after the old woman; though, as she had the start of him, he was unable to tell the precise room or floor where her ascent ended. He was, at present, on the landing-place of the first floor; but the doors of both rooms on the right and left of the staircase being open, he was enabled to look in and satisfy himself that the object of his search was not, to all appearance, there. He proceeded to the second floor, and fancied he heard a whispering.

He paused to listen. He then thought he detected a rustling, as if of female dresses, as the wearers of them passed backwards and forwards. At length, an apparently old man, came out from one of the rooms, whom accordingly Quandish accosted—

“ Pray whom do you want ? ” was the reply of the seeming old man, in a shrill key of voice, more like that of an aged person of the other sex.

“ I have a message for the person whose office is in ——,” naming the desolate spot already described where the letters were taken in.

“ There is no such person here,” said the old man.

“ But I saw an elderly female bring papers here, somewhere in this house ; the person, then, must be here for whom I inquire.”

The commencement of an altercation seemed at this juncture to have arisen ; on hearing which, a person appearing to Quandish to be the very old woman whom he had followed, put her head out at the door and cried out—

“ Whisht ! what would you be talking so loud for in a house of mourning ? Did you not hear the “ keen ”* they were raising as you entered ? Do you go on,” she continued to the old man, “ and see about the coffin. And as to you, Sir, whatever you want to inquire about had better be said in this room, than out on the staircase there.”

So saying, she motioned Quandish into the room, while the old man pursued his way down stairs. This was the very thing Quandish re-

* Irish dirge.

quired. It occurred to him now that, very possibly, the old woman had only the custody of the papers, which she might still be going to take to some further place of destination; and that she had stopped by the way at what might be her own wretched abode. He entered, then, the room, with confidence at first, but started on seeing seated by one side of the fire-place a figure, bolt upright, with a huge coarse veil of black cloth flung over the face and shoulders.

Many surmises as to this singular appearance presented themselves to him; and he was about to ask, “who can that be?” or, “what is the reason of that person’s countenance being veiled?” when the old woman motioned him to a chair, on the opposite side of the fire-place to that on which the veiled figure was seated. She took no further notice of his surprise, than merely to observe, “Ah! the poor man’s asleep—fast asleep”—as a sufficient elucidation of his conjectures as to so singular an appearance.

Having seated himself, Quandish commenced after a moment’s pause—

“You know the gentleman for whom you were carrying those papers, I dare say?”

“Oh dear, yes! I know him well! none better than myself!” she replied, with apparent unconcern.

Quandish was much pleased to see she had

little suspicion (good soul) of the object of his questions, which he now thought he could put undisguisedly and straightforward ; which he had hardly expected would have been permitted him to do.

“ You then can tell me where he lives, I dare say ? ”

“ Yes, to be sure I can ! ” she replied, grinning with seeming unconsciousness, while Quandish grinned too, from a different cause.

“ Can you, then ? ” he said ; “ that’s right.”

“ You seem to wish particularly to know.”

“ No, no ! not particularly,” said Quandish, as it suggested itself to him that if he evinced much anxiety to learn the truth, he should be forced to bid high terms for the intelligence. He was not mistaken in his supposition.

“ I don’t see,” said the old beldame, “ what ‘ right ’ I have to tell folks anything about the gentleman, unless I know the person that asks for him.”

“ No, no—true ; but suppose the person that asked for him would make you some consideration for informing him ? ”

“ Oh, why, then—— ” and as she spoke she felt that her hand had suddenly become heavier by a guinea.

“ Now, then,” said Quandish, “ let us hear ! ” Having paid the toll, he considered that he was about to pass to the point of information. But he was disappointed.

“Do you suppose,” croaked out the old woman, “that I betray a secret for such a trifle as this?” Her words were, however, anticipated by another *douceur*.

“Or *this?*” she exclaimed, with equal scorn. Another guinea, and another succeeded, but still the old crone was not willing to consider the sum equivalent to the value of the secret.

“Why, do you mean to trifle with me?” said her corrupter,

“Ha, ha! no!” screamed the old woman, in a sort of laugh. “I only wished to learn, from the amount you were willing to give, how important the secret of the person’s residence must be. Why, you could not bid more if you were bidding for his life! and would you bid for the life of a fellow-creature?” she added, with an expression of scorn and disgust that astonished Quandish at the energy with which it was uttered, for a person of her age and sex.

“Oh, no,” he replied, “my good woman!—you mistake—you quite mistake. I wished to find him out, as I have news of importance—of advantage—for him to know. I would give anything, consequently, to find him out.”

“Perhaps you have not far to go to do that!” said the old woman, seeming now to have recovered her composure, and resuming her tone of quiet tantalization.

“ I am glad to hear it !” replied Quandish.

“ Perhaps you are in the same house with him !” said the crone. Quandish put his finger to his lips, as he said, with an air of caution—

“ Ay, ay ! shew me the room—where?——” and he now thought she was about to surrender the desired secret ; nor was he altogether mistaken. To make sure, doubly sure, however, he put the remainder of the money which he had, purse and all, into her hands ; and which was certainly, now, a weighty argument.

“ Shew you the room !” she replied, after having looked at the purse and balanced it in her hand ; “ shew you the room !”—then, after a moment’s pause, she added, in her former bantering tone—

“ Perhaps you are in the same room with him !”

Quandish started as his eyes involuntarily rested on the mute figure, whose face was concealed, and whose slumbers had continued undisturbed and unbroken throughout their conversation.

Whilst he was yet intently gazing on this figure, and temporarily lost to what was passing around him, in the surprise it occasioned, he felt himself seized from behind by the throat, under the grasp of a powerful hand, while his head was covered with a veil, much after the fashion of his mute friend opposite.

Resistance was vain,—a stronger arm than his own held him ; while a cord with a ready slip-

noose attached him, beyond the power of extricating himself, to the heavy old arm-chair in which he was seated.

When he was fully secured, and both his arms and legs were pinioned tight to the seat, the veil was snatched aside from his eyes, and on looking for the old hag who had tantalized him so lately, he saw—not *her*—but, to his wonder, beheld in her place the very being he was in quest of—Hatfield himself!

“ Ah, ha ! my worthy friend, Mr. Simmonds ; so you have found me, have you ? ” said our hero, in a tone and with a smile of polite irony, and in his usual “ easy ” way. For a few moments he stood, with this smile on his countenance, regarding the ghastly and astonished features of his trepanned foe, till at length the expression of contempt and irony that marked his smile strengthened into a keener feature of scorn, as he thus proceeded—

“ Ingrate ! is it possible you are the being to whom I have been a benefactor ? But I will not dwell on that. So you have hunted me out at last ! — but remember, you have a Hatfield to deal with. And though, fiend as I must consider you, you have keenly followed on the scent of my blood, yet I have distanced you hitherto. What hinders me this moment from ridding myself of your rife and unrelenting blood-thirsti-

ness—this instant?” And he raised the pistol he had drawn forth as he spoke, with a menace that left the wretched being he addressed little hope for his life. “But no!” he continued; “I will not defile my hands with the blood of so base a miscreant. Were I to take the life of a man, though he were my bitterest enemy, I should commit an offence in the eye of Heaven unpardonable—an offence of a nature I have ever shuddered at the thought of. Yes! Heaven is merciful and relenting; but man is the persecutor that hunts to death. The crime you hunt me down for is pardonable in the sight of supreme Wisdom, but not in the eye of bloodthirsty, wolfish man.* Take your life, then, miscreant; but thank not me for the gift! thank the mercy of that Heaven that overcomes me and holds me back,—that whispers to my anguished spirit to trust in it for future deliverance, as I have trusted in it hitherto and found rescue. I will not shew myself insensible, ungrateful, for the extension of mercy!—I will not forfeit the protection of Heaven by spilling blood, although the worthless blood of such a reptile,—a viper indeed whose blood were better spilled than spared to rid the earth of his loathsome doings; but

* The legislature subsequently annulled this declaration, but not till very lately, and after a course of persevering effort to attain the desired result.

not to be spilled by my hand. Ay, you may curse," he continued, as Quandish in all the venom of impotent rage uttered curses from between his teeth, as he ground them together.

"Ay, you may curse,—you will have leisure to do so. You have sought me, and you have found me; but not to triumph in your search much, I think!" he added, in a tone again of bitter irony. "The mean acts of buying my life, which you were practising where you believed they were available, are turned against yourself. The poor weak old woman you fancied you were bribing to deliver me up was—myself! And most seasonably has this sum come into my hands; it will enable me to institute another step towards baffling your bloodthirsty pursuit.

"There are twenty and odd guineas here, it seems. Ah! well, you can afford to pay that, since you will be richly repaid the amount, in the balance above it of the Reward Money—when you get it—when you secure me!" and he laughed bitterly, in mingled scorn and indignation. "At present, I leave you where you are, but not without a companion!"

So saying, he raised the veil from the face of the figure that was seated in the chair opposite Quandish, while he hastened from the room which Quandish heard locked and bolted after him.

To what a companion was the wretched informer left ! That unveiled brow disclosed the livid aspect of death ! It was the death bewailed in that Irish "keen" he had heard on entering the house.

In the squalid habitation in which the deceased had met his end, life had found little comfort, little of repose ; and a bed was even wanting for him to breathe his last on. The chair in which he died, his cold, stiff figure still occupied. There was "no speculation" in those eyes ; no friendly hand had closed the lids to veil them decently. There they glared in fixed and horrid lifelessness, full in the face of the scared being who was constrained to meet them. It was in vain he strove to shun their chill encounter—there they glared—fixed immoveably on him—still chill—still deadly—still the same !

With intense gazing, the wretched man's brain, no less than sight, became dizzy. A faint sickness overspread his whole frame. By degrees, the horrid Mesmerism* to which he was subjected had its effect on his senses. Disordered fancies crowded on his brain—the phantom figure seemed to raise itself and approach him—he fancied he felt its cold hands touch him—he struggled to rescue himself

* "Animal Magnetism," of which Mesmer was the original propounder.

from the clammy touch, but in vain,—the horrid night-mare of a deranged fancy was on him,—he could not escape. Before him the dead form rose and met him face to face, while the icy touch thrilled through his frame—he shrieked aloud—in his delirium he called on the name of Hatfield to assist him, unconscious that he was appealing for aid to the being he had a brief period past sought to destroy ; but Hatfield had aided him in times past, and the impression possibly haunted him, though he had since done his utmost to efface it.

A stupor came on him, and a shout of laughter, as if of fiends, rose over his dream of horror. The bonds that constrained him could not have held him more strictly bound than the ice-bonds of terror that mastered him—all insensible and apparently lifeless as he was.

The eyes, they were starting from the sockets, in the convulsive struggle his frame had sustained—the limbs were listless—the hands dropped. The livid hues on the cheek seemed caught, as it were, in ghastly contagion from the brow of death opposite, that still glared fixedly on him, as though watching in silent, relentless scrutiny, its deadly spell upon his form !

CHAPTER VIII.

“ *King*. Do you think 'tis this ?

Queen. It may be very likely.”

* * * *

“ *King*. His affections do not that way tend,
Nor what he spake. . . .

And I do doubt the hatch, and the disclose,
Will be some danger.”

SHAKSPEARE.

SOME little time had elapsed since the events related in our preceding chapter, when Mr. Howbiggen, and the distinguished spinster, his sister, were again in conversation with each other. Of course, during this interval, the *soirée* at Lady Balderton's had passed, together with various other parties, which Miss Howbiggen had, with much coaxing and teasing by turns, prevailed on her dyspeptic brother to encounter. Soirée had succeeded *soirée*; dinner, dinner; *conversazione*, *conversazione*, — like waves rolling one on another, and each washing away the trace of its predecessor.

Lady Balderton being connected in the degree of "hundredth cousin," as Mr. Howbiggen would sneeringly observe, with himself and sister, the social intercourse between Miss Howbiggen and her "noble cousin" had been kept up beyond the limits of the single *soirée* already mentioned. In fact, Miss Howbiggen was (to use the uncouth language of our grandfathers) "mighty friends" with her ladyship; which is not always the case amongst "relations." The divisions, indeed, and jealous feuds amongst kindred, are, it is melancholy to think, often much more mean and rancorous than between the most utter strangers that are inimical to each other. But such was, happily, not the footing on which Miss Howbiggen and her kinswoman stood; and not only had our amiable spinster been present at the grander banquets at Balderton house, but—yet more inviting exhibition of kindred confidence and esteem on the part of her noble cousin—she had enhanced by her presence the charms of that select group, the "family party," which Lady Balderton occasionally summoned around her, in the brief intervals of more extended pomp and luxurious riot.

Lord Balderton, being but an Irish viscount and no peer, was obliged to seek public distinction in the "lower house;" and his official duties requiring his attendance in his "place" almost every evening

of the week,—except the dearly met, and fondly looked-for Wednesday,—his hearth and home were often left as desolate as that of any club-lounger of the present day, who becomes a “male-gossip,” rather than a “family-man,” by dawdling for ever at his club, away from home,” as his neglected spouse will tell you. On these occasions of being left to herself, Lady Balderton would often seek the *agrémens* of Miss Howbiggen’s society, when cards and tea *en petite comité* relieved the evening of ennui.

But a word more on that eminent personage Lord Balderton. The “place” we cursorily stated him as holding was no less than the important post of secretary for Ireland; but how far he was fitted for that station or not was a subject of much cavil amongst some, while others were so uncere-monious and uncomplimentary as to declare he had no capacity for it at all. It is true he had an overwhelming and portentous command of words; and decked out trifles in a pomp of grandiloquence worthy a Titan when uttering invectives against the heavenly dwellers of Olympus. But if from the midst of all these sounding sentences and pomp of diction, you were to search for any pith or point, you would look for it as hopelessly as for Gratiano’s reasons, which, enveloped as they were in follies and trifling, were as one or two poor

grains of wheat to a bushel of chaff; and even when found, they scarcely repaid the search.

However, be this as it might, Lord Balderton's Brobdignagian periods, and "*sesquipedalia verba*," his shallow arguments spun out "*per ambages verborum*," which, being interpreted, means "*rigmarole*"—all these, too, being rendered yet more portentous by a "most admirable" confusion of metaphor, and parentheses longer than the sentence they interlarded—had, yet, their use. For despite all the singular characteristics of his lordship's eloquence, it often stood the government leader in the house in good stead; for if time was to be gained by the mere ventilation of inane verbiage until the "leader" was ready with some momentous motion,—or again, if the attention of the house was to be diverted from more important matter, its senses puzzled and led away from the merits of the question—the noble lord was found a most useful servant. He would "talk" on anything and everything, and without end, as far as dealing in "generals;" but as for the "point"—he was never accused of such a feat as coming to one.

The noble lord, though of hasty temper (it was said) himself, yet kept others in amazing good humour; and there was a "set" in the house that used uniformly to come down to it with the

view of having a "treat," as they termed it, in hearing Lord Balderton's "good things." There they would sit—the ribald crew—with a ready grin lurking at the corner of their lips, the moment he was "on his legs"—a grin, which the sun of his lordship's genius was soon to ripen into the full-blown glory of loud cachinnation. How could it be otherwise? For even his best friends could scarcely sit near him, and look grave, when the splendid jumble of metaphors flung forth by his lordship, "astonished their weak minds;" when measures were represented as "hingeing on a feature," and when the "incendiary spirit" was said to "inundate and deluge the country!"

But the great problem with all persons, whether of his own or the opposite party, was, whence was derived what sense ever *did* transpire through his harangues? It was difficult to imagine that himself was the source of it, and there were many surmises on the subject. Some said that his friend the Prime Minister supplied the grain of wit to the bushel of rigmaroles or "gab," as it was indiscriminately designated. Others told stories of his being hours on hours closeted with a very shrewd and clever private secretary; and it was generally believed that it was from this source the qualifying ingredient of common sense and argumentative "pith" was acquired.

This valuable Achates of Lord Balderton was so much occupied with his duties of secretary, with answering letters, transcribing documents, and drilling, or (what is called at college) "cramming" the noble lord, that he found little time for society, and was often as much an "absentee" from Lady Balderton's *soirées* as his lordship himself. Seldom, however, as his multifarious duties—and chiefly that of "drumming" sense into his patron's numskull—would permit him to engage in the relaxations of society, yet he had not been so much a recluse but that Miss Howbiggen had met him once or twice; and though he had a certain obliquity in one of his eyes, and was absolutely without whiskers, (peculiarities which she recognised in none of her acquaintance,) yet there was "a something," she fancied, in his face and countenance, that struck her as not having been seen by her for the first time.

This surmise she of course expressed to her brother.

"Pooh, nonsense!" he replied, hastily, and with his usual scepticism. "You women are always finding out resemblances, and fancying you know this person, and that person, and the other, just for the sake of gratifying an inclination to prate about people!"

"My dear Tobias, may not a person express an

idea that she has seen another before, without suggesting it as a hinge for idle speculation? Now I think of it, he is uncommonly like a person I have seen before! Who can it be?" she said, as she sate puzzling herself with her efforts at recollection.

"I'm sure *I* can't tell!" uttered the "good-humoured" Tobias, "nor does it very much signify!"

"Oh! I know who it is he is like!"

"Well, who, pray?"

"Why, no less a person than our former guest—that person that passed himself off as Colonel Renmore."

"Pshaw! nonsense! absurd!—how could *he* ever become Lord Balderton's secretary? My good Hetty, do let me advise you not to give way to this foolish habit (excuse me) of rummaging out 'who people are!' Just let them alone, and their likenesses! It was all through your importunity that we first admitted, or rather worried, that certainly clever and agreeable, but designing person into our house; and now, it seems, you will not rest contented until you commit a positive affront in tattling to Lady Balderton your surmises that her husband's confidential secretary and this adventurer, this *soi-disant* 'Colonel,' may be the same person."

"No, no; no such thing, Mr. Howbiggen. There you step beyond the point in question. I only say they are like each other."

"Well, what matters that? You may see fifty people like him, or like one another. The expression of a conjecture such as that you are longing to deliver yourself of can be of no avail, unless it were addressed to the detection of a proscribed individual. If it has not this object in view, it is mere idle 'gossip,' and had better be suppressed. I assure you, it will be highly affronting to Lord Balderton's secretary, Mr. . . . what is his name?"

"Cappergill," replied the lady.

"Mr. Cappergill,—if you go spreading about that he is like a notorious adventurer, nay a denounced criminal!"

So saying, Mr. Howbiggen hobbled out of his arm-chair to take up a review, which had about that time come forth on its wings of "blue and saffron," like a mighty dragon fly or hornet, buzzing about and stinging all that came in its way; its waspish characteristics recommending it congenially to our ascetic.

Miss Howbiggen feeling conscious that her brother had the best of the argument, was not sorry to let the topic drop for the present, and as far as *he* was concerned. An old comic poet says—
"You shall never convince me, however con-

vincing;" and of this proposition Miss Howbiggen's "amiable failing" appears to offer an illustration; for it was not her disposition to be convinced by argument, however reasonable, or silenced by contradiction, however decisive. On the contrary, the more she thought of this "singular resemblance," the more fidgety she became each succeeding day, to find some channel for the communication of her ideas, and yet more some confirmation of their validity.

Such a channel was not long wanting, and into the bosom of the person who afforded it, she poured forth her "surmise," with an anxiety that was not surpassed in the instance of even Midas's wife, in disburdening herself of the secret, that told such a pretty tale at her husband's expense.

If, then, Miss Howbiggen was delighted on her part in making the communication, the satisfaction she afforded to the person she addressed was reciprocal. This being was no other than Quandish, whom we left in so disagreeable a predicament some time ago, according to the period that has elapsed in our story, and the circumstances of whose extrication from this dilemma we shall afford in due time.

At present, we shall proceed to say, that he grinned a ghastly smile on hearing Miss Howbig-

gen's "surmise"—a smile indicative of bitter malice and a resolution for revenge. He caught at the "hint," (as it appeared to him to be,) that Mr. Capperhill was the person he so panted to find—he caught at it, as a drowning man would at a straw; for he had begun almost to despair of succeeding in his pursuit of his prey, since his last unexpected, and for *him* disastrous "falling in" with the desired object of his quest.

Since that period, he had been yet more ardent, if possible, than ever, in his endeavours to discover and secure the person against whom his rancour had been so much exasperated; but all trace of him was lost. Various were the disguises Quandish adopted in order to facilitate his search; now wandering about as a jew pedlar—now as a news-monger;—in fact, traversing the town in all directions and capacities.

His meeting with Miss Howbiggen had been entirely owing to his own vigilance. We remember the circumstance of Mr. Howbiggen being so plagued with the importunity of the Jew pencil-vender. This worthy was no other than Quandish, and his annoyance of Mr. Howbiggen was a short period subsequent to the discomfiture he had met from Hatfield, as lately witnessed. He had been active in tracing out any of the gentry that happened to be in town whom Hatfield had known,

as he thought it possible his necessities might lead him to practise some expedient on them, in order to raise money, and hence he hoped a clue would be afforded towards arriving at the man himself.

Accordingly, when he had discovered the house of old Howbiggen, which he did by following him pertinaciously as we have before described, he made it his business to lurk about the premises, in order to catch an opportunity of addressing Miss Howbiggen as she should be stepping into the carriage. He well knew her propensity for what her brother termed "gossiping," and was certain that if any intelligence such as he desired was to be arrived at, he should gain it through her, if she had it to afford him. He was not disappointed, as has been seen, in falling in with her.

He made her a most lowly and respectful reverence as he pretended to be casually passing by, his appearance being that of the dissenting preacher again, under which character he had been known to her at Buttermere. His gear accordingly corresponded to this sanctimonious character, and commanded her respect by the sobriety of its guise. It consisted of a pepper-and-salt square-tailed coat, with large silvered buttons, a pair of drab small-clothes, and gaiters of the same complexion; the "lower man" being terminated by the huge square-toed shoes that marked the splay-

foot of the wearer, the instep being further surmounted by an enormous buckle, which some of our worthy village "gaffers" may still, even at this late day, be seen to exhibit.

Miss Howbiggen was by no means backward or uncondescending in acknowledging the apparent preacher's salutation. She had now found, it occurred to her, some one to whom to impart the "surmise" that so haunted her. Nay! the appearance of Quandish was a signal to recur to those recollections of Buttermere, and, in connexion with that spot, of Hatfield also, that offered so excellent an avenue for the introduction of this "surmise." The tale was then at her tongue's end, concerning the "resemblance" to our hero which she had discovered in Mr. Capperhill.

She lost no time, it may be supposed, in hastening to arrive at the expression of all she wished to relieve herself of—concluding, "And such a resemblance to him, in spite of his squint and red hair! Oh! Mr. Quandish, you would agree with me, as regards the likeness, were you to see him. And surely there is no harm in saying one person is like another, in spite of all Mr. Howbiggen says! But he," she added, to herself, "speaks just for the sake of contradiction, and for no other reason in the world."

We have already stated the satisfaction with which this intelligence was received by Quandish, and he immediately set about taxing his wits to devise the best means of putting the inquisitive lady in the way of arriving at a still further assurance of the validity of her surmise, relative to the identity of the secretary and his enemy; his determination being to act upon the intelligence he hoped to extract from her, and shape his plans accordingly.

Meantime, he related to her, in obedience to her inquiry, the whole circumstances of his pursuit from Derwentwater of the "culprit," as he designated Hatfield, carrying them down to the last disastrous rencontre with him, which ended in himself being left *vis-à-vis* with the dead figure, as above described. The murky court which had been the scene of this grim catastrophe appears, from the information he now gave the wondering Miss Howbiggen, to have been situate in that district of Irish colonization whose tutelary saint is "St. Giles."

"Good heavens, how shocking!" she exclaimed. "And how, pray, were you extricated at last from such a frightful predicament?"

"When I next came to myself, I found a number of Irish people round me, who were loading me with abuse, so far from giving me any comfort.

They asked how I dared to intrude into the house of death and mourning, where they were already ‘keening?’ This objurgation was but an excuse, as I suppose, for maltreating me, in the course of which they despoiled me of everything I possessed. However, I was glad to submit to the alternative of usage bad even as this, rather than remain in my present horrible condition, and eventually they turned me out with scarcely anything to cover me.”

“But have you not taken steps to punish these villains?”

“So bewildered was I, and so ill had I recovered my wits from the effects of the shock I had sustained, (and I will own it makes me feel a dizziness even to recount it,) that I could not tell who my assailants were, so as to bring them to justice.”

“In fact, they robbed you of everything, good Mr. Quandish?”

“Ay, verily did they! and it is a mercy they did not murder me; but the Lord be praised, their hands were stayed from the worse offence.”

“But how came the dead body there? and what had they to do with it?”

“I suppose the dead person had been some relative of the party, for the term ‘keening’ expresses a lament for the dead. Be this as it may, they wreaked their fury on me as an intruder, as I have related to you.”

“But how came Hatfield there? Did you go back to those desolate rooms where his papers were taken from the newspaper office?”

“As to his presence in that obscure spot of the court, I conclude that it was at this skulking-place the papers used eventually to come to his hand, being in the first instance left at the ‘desolate rooms’ you speak of, and where I first saw the old woman, whose apparel he had disguised himself under when he discomfited me so. In fact, the light was so uncertain and imperfect that I felt no doubt it was the same old woman I had followed to the court; but she had passed me on the staircase under the guise of an aged man in black, and one of the ‘keeners’ as I supposed, and who went for a coffin as I overheard him say. Oh, good heavens! I shall never forget the state I was left in, in that garret!

“As I awoke from my stupor, a sudden and horrible glare of torches blazed round me, and bewildered me so that I fancied I was opening my eyes in the abodes of eternal pain. The figures, too, that held the torches before me, looking so ghastly and fiendish as they did, appeared more like a group of demons than any living assemblage.”

“They were the ‘keeners,’ I presume, who maltreated you so, with their catholic torch-light ceremonial?”

“They were so. Ah, happy was I when I at length was fairly out of their reach, although I had been turned out of their horrid den with scarcely a rag left on me! Happy was I in escaping with my life.” He sanctimoniously added in his character of preacher—“Heaven be praised!”

“But you have not told me yet whether you searched for Hatfield at the rooms where the papers were first of all left for him?”

“Of course, I went there with the police, but no clue or trace could be discovered of him. The doors were left open, and a placard placed outside the entrance, saying that Mr. Squires (such appears to have been the name he had adopted in this newspaper adventure) had left England. So here we are at fault again, and though the apprehension of this dangerous adventurer is a public duty, yet Heaven forbid!” exclaimed Quandish, acting now his old part, (and in which alone Miss Howbiggen knew him,) of sanctimoniousness, “Heaven forbid I should seek the life of any man!—and it would be much against my will,” continued the hypocrite, “and my own individual feelings, that I should give this man up to justice, even if I could apprehend him. Still we have duties to society to perform — duties to our better fellow-subjects! But as to the person you mention as so like Hatfield, I should hardly think there could be any chance or probability of their identity?”

He spoke with an air of pretended indifference, knowing that he should only, by the doubt he expressed, be irritating Miss Howbiggen's curiosity to ascertain, if she could, how far her "doubt" or "surmise" possessed validity or not. She replied, "Still the subject is one of no inconsiderable curiosity, and really I wish I knew the best and most delicate means of arriving at some satisfaction of my doubt."

"Why," replied the wily man, "the plainest and most obvious, as well as most delicate way would be, by relating to him in the course of conversation my story of the Irish garret, and the predicament in which I was placed."

"And see how it affects him, you would add?" eagerly interposed Miss Howbiggen, delighted at the happy suggestion.

"Why, yes," replied Quandish, with treacherous calmness; "and should you," he added, "be at any loss to conclude whether this Mr. Capper-gill exhibits any consciousness of the circumstances or not, perhaps you would favour me," he continued in a wily tone, "by informing me of his manner, and the observations he makes on the circumstances; and as far as my poor wit can judge, I shall be happy to tell you whether your present surmise has been reasonably entertained or not."

So saying, the wily Quandish, having suggested everything he secretly desired should be put in

practice, withdrew with a profound reverence, letting Miss Howbiggen know that, by her leave, he would certainly wait on her to learn anything she might be pleased to communicate, relative to the circumstances on which they had just been talking, merely, he repeated, to see how far her surmise had been reasonably entertained, and for no other reason in the world !

This qualifying clause had been added by the hypocrite out of apprehension, lest Miss Howbiggen's alarm might have been awakened by the consideration, that possibly the life of a fellow-creature might be eventually hazarded, by this wanton gratification of her restless curiosity. In fact, the thought did suggest itself to her mind, after "the tempter" had taken his leave ; and for awhile she hesitated whether she should relate a word to Mr. Capperhill about the matter ; but the restlessness of curiosity battled too strongly to be subdued, and her alarm was quieted by the thought—

" Oh, pooh !—impossible !—Lord Balderton's secretary can be no other than he seems to be. Besides, this good man Quandish would never wish to proceed to ulterior steps, if I begged him not,—even should Mr. Capperhill betray any consciousness of the circumstances of the story."

Thus quieting any apprehensive qualms that rose in her mind, and too willing to flatter the

promptings of her untiring spirit of inquisitiveness, Miss Howbiggen addressed herself with all impatience to going to Lady Balderton's. An opportunity of setting her heart at rest was afforded the very next evening, on the occasion of a *soirée*, which Miss Howbiggen graced with her presence.

If this estimable lady had been anxious hitherto, as regards the secret object of her visit, in what a tumult of fidget did her pulse now throb, during the interval previously to Mr. Capperhill's making his appearance!

At length he came, but afforded her for a long time no opportunity of addressing him. Somehow or another she fancied that he always endeavoured to avoid her. This evening, in particular, he seemed engaged in conversing with others.

At last, her impatience would hold out no longer. She advanced towards him. He did not perceive the insidious "march" she was stealing on him, being engaged in "drilling," as usual, Lord Balderton, and apparently using no small pains to force a comprehension of some proposition, through the husk of his noble patron's obtuseness.

A consideration such as this did not for a moment weigh with Miss Howbiggen, so she accosted the secretary abruptly, while Lord Balderton having received as much instruction as he could well support, was not sorry to have the stretch of attention

he had been exerting, relaxed by Miss Howbiggen's interruption. He accordingly moved away, leaving the coast clear for the anxious spinster to address Capperhill.

"Oh ! Mr. Capperhill, I'm so glad to have been afforded an opportunity of speaking to you !—but you really are so much in request, that I had quite despaired of the pleasure."

Capperhill bowed and made no answer, though he muttered something to himself not peculiarly expressive of satisfaction at her interruption of his conversation with Lord Balderton. She took notice that his "squint" was remarkable on the present occasion, and therefore, together with his red hair, was convinced he was by no means the person she had once or twice suggested him to be. She therefore spoke with greater readiness and confidence, being more and more relieved of any qualms of hesitation.

"I had something so droll to tell you," she said, "in illustration of the conversation the other evening, about the singular events one hears of every day in life." This appeared a plausible excuse for introducing the subject she had in view. "So droll—so singular !" she added.

"Indeed !" answered Capperhill, with pretended interest. "Ay, it is a droll world we live in ! And whether the romance of it is more strange, or the

realities more bitter, is a difficult question to decide !”

“ You would say so, were I to tell you a story I heard the other day.” And then she suddenly exclaimed—“ Dear me, how like you are a gentleman I once knew !”

“ Umph !” was the laconic reply, or rather acknowledgment of Miss Howbiggen’s apostrophe.

“ You are, indeed !” only there are circumstances it is unpleasant to mention about the gentleman you bear a resemblance to,” she added, with a delicacy and consideration truly praiseworthy ; and then she wound up this exhibition of “ delicacy” by saying—“ I refer to—to—a very singular character, known to me some little time ago by the name of Colonel Renmore.”

“ Oh ! Colonel Renmore,” replied Capperghill, smiling ; “ let me see—who was he ?” exhibiting perfect unconcern as he spoke ; and apparently answering more out of courtesy than as if he were interested in Miss Howbiggen’s observations.

“ Dear me ! don’t you know ?—have you never heard of him ? Why, he was the person that married the famous ‘ Beauty of Buttermere,’ and is supposed, now, to be playing some part, here in London, best known to himself ; unless he has gone abroad.”

At the name of the Beauty of Buttermere a

momentary paleness might have been traced over the cheek of Capperhill; but it was in great measure concealed by a certain judicious use of rouge on the part of that person; for rouge had not, at the period in view, been abandoned, but was still a very general adjunct of the toilette of both sexes. It had strong advocates in most of the members of the "old school," who, in adhering to its use, declared they supported the doctrine, "that it was a duty to society to make yourself appear to the best advantage, and disguise defects as much as possible—whether the pallor of dissipation and sickness, or the wrinkles of age!" Perhaps vanity would have whispered a more true reason for its use, and suggested that it was but a bootless effort at exhibiting the appearance of youth when youth was flown.

But to return to Capperhill. The rouge he had applied so judiciously, harmonized so well with the tints of the red hair he wore, that no one imagined it was any other than his natural complexion and colour.

To the mention of the Beauty of Buttermere and her marriage, he replied, hastily—

"Oh, yes; I remember now all about it. I heard the circumstances, though I was abroad at the time."

"To be sure!" replied Miss Howbiggen; "I

thought you would remember the story! Well, but this is not all; I have another tale, no less singular, concerning the person who married her, that was told me."

"By whom?" asked Capperhill, with an abruptness and apparent interest that surprised Miss Howbiggen, being so opposed to his indifference of manner hitherto.

"By the very man," she replied, "who was an actor in the scene I shall relate to you!"

"And what was his name?"

"Quandish."

At the mention of this name it did not escape Miss Howbiggen that Capperhill appeared to shrink, as it were, within himself, judging as she did from the look of surprise he suddenly exhibited, though it was subdued instantaneously, by an expression of reserve, which was further softened down into his former calm composure and almost indifference. This circumstance she treasured up in her mind; meantime, she proceeded, after repeating the name, and asking Capperhill "if he had ever heard it before?"

"Oh dear, no!—never! But pray let me hear the story."

Accordingly, she related the whole scene of the death-chamber in which Quandish had figured with so little satisfaction to himself. She looked

hard, as she spoke, in Capperhill's face, to try and discern if the narrative produced any effect on his countenance; but no such thing was perceptible, except that he appeared to listen with the due interest which the story demanded; and expressed a mingled sense of horror, and amusement too, at the features of awe no less than awkwardness combined, that invested the circumstance of Quandish's situation, when tied down in the chair, facing the dead figure.

"It is a good story," he observed, "and would make a famous scene on the stage! I should not be surprised if the whole history of Hatfield and 'the Beauty,' and this man Quandish, of whom you speak, were 'hashed up' into a melodrama!"

So saying, he turned aside, with an air of indifference, to speak to some one who most opportunely came up at this moment to converse with him. Miss Howbiggen, on her part, as she now repaired to the seat she had left, thought to herself—

"Well! if this person is the same that both Mr. Quandish and myself surmised it might be, I am most marvellously mistaken. It is true there is a cast in the countenance that still strikes me as singularly resembling the person I knew as Colonel Renmore; but I am quite satisfied now, that he never could have shewn such indifference, except in one very trifling instance, had he been the

person in question. Well!" she added, "at any rate, there is no harm done; and my doubts are set at rest!"

This important result she was now all anxiety to impart to her brother, on her return home; though how little he cared about the matter we need scarcely suggest. To maintain silence on it till the next morning, when she should see Quandish, was impossible. Accordingly, she hied home again, with as much "fidget," though from opposite causes, as that with which she had set out.

It is not our intention, however, for the sake of depicting Mr. Howbiggen's impatience at hearing what she had to relate, to protract the progress of our story by repeating what the reader knows. The impatience of the testy old gentleman may well be imagined; and we shall only observe that on the present occasion it was exasperated to a more than usual pitch; for it so happened that he was just about to retire to bed, more and more peevish than ever from the effects of indisposition, (the complaint on his chest having increased,) when Miss Howbiggen returned to disquiet him.

She entered the drawing-room just as he was retiring from it, with the little night-lamp he used, in his hand, and actually kept him standing, "in act to go," until she had compelled him "to hear her out." Of course the time was in no little degree

protracted by his interpolations of grumbling, and her objections to them.

A less impatient ear was afforded her the next morning by Quandish, who "humbly waited on her" according to the appointment she had sanctioned. This wily person drew very different conclusions to those of Miss Howbiggen, from the unconcern and indifference manifested by Mr. Capperhill according to her representation. Pretending to concur with her, however, as to the banishing all further "surmise" on the matter, he withdrew, his heart swayed between hope and fear as to the result of the measures he now instantly pursued, though he did not tell his plans to the unsuspecting Miss Howbiggen. These measures were the procuring a warrant to arrest "James Hatfield on charge of felony," in Lord Balderton's house.

But lo and behold ! when the officers of justice, together with Quandish, arrived at the house, they found the whole family in dismay at the sudden departure and disappearance of Mr. Capperhill.

"Mr. Capperhill call you him?" cried out Quandish and his brother myrmidons. "He was no other than the 'notorious Hatfield !'"

"Hatfield ! Hatfield in my house !" exclaimed the astonished Lord Balderton. "Impossible ! I knew Mr. Capperhill in Ireland, and had the good

fortune to meet him again in London after a considerable period of severance—three or four years! On my mentioning the circumstance of my private secretaryship being vacant, he was good enough to accept it; and I, on my part, esteemed myself happy in having found so valuable and able an assistant. Impossible, gentlemen; you must mistake!”

“Why, then, has he so suddenly disappeared—this Mr. Capperhill?” asked the first officer. “Why, my lord, he would take in the whole privy council, much more one single head in it! I have no doubt he has before successfully imposed on your lordship under the name of Capperhill—one of a hundred names he has at different times adopted. He was ‘good enough’ was he,” continued the man, chuckling, and addressing a “knowing look” to his comrades, “to accept the office of your lordship’s secretary?—he, he, he! I dare say he was!”

“The most fortunate rogue I ever knew!” observed another of the myrmidons.

“It shall not avail him, though,” observed Quandish, restlessly, and not at all entering into the spirit of the officers’ ribaldry; “he cannot yet have escaped far, and if I might venture to suggest, will in all probability be quitting London, now that the chase is set on foot for him here. If so, it is ten

chances to one he will run northward again ; for to Dublin, his favourite old haunt, he scarcely dares venture, being too well known. And I know his plan of ‘doubling’ like a hare upon his old track.”

“ Well, then, northward shall we set out on the chase after him ?” asked one of the officers, as he added, “ Some of us can stay and search for him here, if possibly he may still be lurking in town ; and the others can set out of town after him ;—and since we know no surer direction in which to trace him, let it be northward, for it is more likely he will go where his wife is than anywhere else.”

“ No doubt ; and get her to go abroad with him, eh ?” added the other officer.

“ Come along, then,” said Quandish, “ since we can resolve on no surer plan of pursuit. Every moment we delay is so much ‘starting distance’ given the culprit, and will be a cause of future increased trouble to ourselves.”

So saying they took leave hurriedly of his lordship, who stood transfixed in amazement at the whole parley that he had heard, and with difficulty recovered from the surprise it had occasioned him.

“ Well !” at length he exclaimed with his peculiar emphasis of style, “ rigmarole,” and characteristic felicity of metaphor, “ I never, in all the dark annals of mystification that have bewildered and

dazzled human perception, either heard, read of, or experienced anything to equal in '*vivid obscurity*' the present *astounding* 'cataclûsmus' I may call it, or *overwhelming* of the mind! Capperpill turn out to be Hatfield! Preposterous, and unaccountable! Where shall I find (be he who he may) such another secretary? such an *alter ego*, as to dictating all that could promote my interests? Why, he was the very *mainspring* on which all the *features* of my *brightest* designs were *rooted*. What is to be done?—loss irreparable, positively!"

With this despairing conclusion, yet no less splendidly characteristic harangue, Lord Balderton retired to his study, to concoct, as best he might, without the prompting of his late "valuable secretary," his evening's speech at the "House."

CHAPTER IX.

“ Upon the mountain’s dizzy brink she stood,
Over her look the shadow of a mood
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth. The wind had blown
Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.
She would have clasped me to her glowing frame,
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame,
Which now the cold winds stole.”

SHELLEY.

STERN winter now raised his icy sceptre over hill, and vale, and melancholy meer; the wide panorama of that mountain region which we have erewhile viewed, decked in the chequered beauty of lichen and heath-flower, and all golden-glowing beneath the sun of summer, are languid, dark, and forbidding. We face again those mountain heights, (from which for a while we have been called,) to mark their frown, unredeemed, as when last we viewed them, by the smile of azure heavens and a season of joy.

Far and wide, snow-capped peak and crag, from Skiddaw southward to the Langdale heights and Helvellyn, formed now one sublime as drear palace for Winter to hold his court in. Chiefest those peers of his vast and sullen Council, the Pikes of Scawfell, reared their ice-tiared crests, gleaming chilly and afar through the frore void. Hark! there is celebration of him in those December blasts that yell, as though demon orgies, through Wastdale's dreary "den!"

The gaunt Stranger-phantom of the Brochen might pour a laugh of unearthly joy at finding himself at home amid these stern British wildernesses, as congenial to him as his native Hartz solitudes. All sear and scattered, the leaves, tossed in gloomy disport by the eddying winds, dance in weird mazes along Seathwaite side. The spirit of Desolation that haunts the void, finds welcome terror, too, in that sable vapour-shroud where he wraps him brooding over Shoulthwaite Moss, or the dun-banks of moaning Ennerdale. No voice of joy or life, no jocund carol of birds taking wing over the yellow heath-blossom, no peaceful lowing of kine, (happy sounds!) which have erewhile greeted us as we shared the lovely mountain maiden's track, are now to be heard over vale and hill.

In seeking, then, once again her trace, shall we

look for her, as wont, over her jocund and wild mountain track, accompanied by her herd?—shall we look for her under her maternal roof, at the once peaceful little hostelry where we have so often sojourned, and which has erewhile won cheerfulness from her smile—ay, more even than from that of the lovely haunts amidst which it was embosomed?

A leaden looking and stagnate waste spread now the waters of the mere, which in happier hours, and under a fairer season, gleamed before us one azure sparkling expanse, or crimsoned beneath suns of splendour. Changed indeed is the scene no less than the feelings of HER with whom anon we must gaze on it. The only voice that breaks on the vast stillness and solitude of all that mountain district, is the hoarse murmur of some waterfall from the steep, whether it awaken the dreary cavern echoes to respond to the call of Lodore or of Scale Force.

The elm is bare whose venerable arms stretch them in front of yonder dwelling. You will scarcely know those walls again, where the rich verdant mantle of their parasite creepers is stripped away by the hand of winter, and the naked tendrils of the plants are but the skeleton of their former luxuriance. A red spot gleams through the dun and dark air as you approach from the hill-side opposite. On coming nearer, you see it is the

foliage of the scarlet winter-creeper* over those walls; and it seems as though boon Nature had given the poor shivery leaves a warmer dress—to look at the deep scarlet hues that they have donned in the place of their summer verdure. The wild and bright green briony, too, that rambled over thorn and brier of the garden hedge,—she has clad it in a vestment of wool; for such seems the fleecy appearance which it now wears, under the name of “traveller’s joy.”

There was one, however, who, despite its wintry disguise, recognised that spot, that dwelling, and that garden-wild. Where the little brook that skirts the last of these poured sluggishly along, creeping ice-bound beneath its brittle shell of crystal, a fair form pauses, and looks upon the well-known spot—looks through the tear that rises as she regards what was once her home—but is now no more a home for her. Those features of loveliness, shaded as they are by sorrow, bespeak the face of Gertrude. The winter around her was not more desolate than the winter of her heart. Or even had summer lit those mazes in all its lustre,—had heavens of harmony—had nature’s music tuned their spirit to joy—yet, could the bright contagion have visited her abandonment, to

* The vine-ivy, (*Ampelopsis hederacea*,) or Virginia-creeper.

warm it into gladness or persuade it to turn to that strain? Not so: summer had been no summer to her; for objects are but bright and happy as the eyes of the Mind see them with a vision clouded or unclouded by its secret shadows. The chill sun-ray that feebly strove to smile on the rockbrow whence she looked, seemed in its faintness as though the irresolution of one that offers a consolation he knows is bootless!

When we last took leave of Gertrude she was under the roof, truly paternal, of the "good curate" of Lorton; and though we left her gradually recruiting in strength and spirits under the encouragement of his kindness, aided, too, by the frequent visits of the benevolent Golefield and Dr. Esdaile, yet, after all, she felt as one abandoned in the world. How could she feel otherwise, when she turned, as now, to the thought of the home she had forfeited, and which, though circumstances had rendered that thought at times painful, was still her home! From this, a mistaken sense of duty on the part of a parent, at once cold in heart as narrow in mind, had shut her callously out. Then, again, when she addressed her thoughts to him to whom she ought to have looked for all the fostering care that a husband supplies for the loss of a parent's presence, what was she met by but the harassment of uncertainty as to his fate, and a dread pre-

sentiment that storms the most fearful menaced it, of which she must feel the bitterness? For still she loved him—still the images recurred to her of what he had been, and how dear were the moments passed with him—still her heart pleaded for him—still it seconded the benign representations which we remember Fenton's making for her consolation—still hope supported and animated her, and she fled to it, insecure as its gleam of confidence was,—less, perhaps, from real conviction that it was cherished for any considerable avail, than from her love for him who possessed her heart, and for whose succour and rescue she never ceased offering tacitly her vows to the dread Dispenser of all human events.

Engaged with these thoughts, and impressed with these feelings, Gertrude had taken her melancholy ramble from the roof of Fenton, which had supplied her a home ever since the period when we last parted from her. Often did the good curate accompany her on her accustomed rambles over those once happy wilds, calling her mind away from subjects that were painful to it, and engaging it insensibly on such as awakened a more pleasing and healthful interest. When his duties prevented him from sharing her wanderings, she often pursued them alone, and on these occasions, it is needless to say, her thoughts were such

as we have described and reverted to—subjects that more nearly and painfully affected them.

She had extended her track to the heights above Buttermere, and for a moment paused, looking at her former home, as has been described, and which, though a parent's interdict forbade her entrance into it, was still acknowledged dear by the filial affection that lingered round a heart like her own, of the kindest impulses, no less than sentiments the most forgiving and generous. Other and yet tenderer remembrances, too, crowded upon her, and spoke in the tear we have already witnessed glisten in her eye, but which she now brushed away, and snatched herself from the spot, which was too much fraught with pain for her any longer to dwell upon it.

Onward she proceeded; yet still her wayward foot took the path that was little calculated to estrange her from remembrances painful as dear; for now the western ridge of Melbreak, where often had *his* step wandered with her own, and where first she had gleamed, visionlike, on him, rose before her. She hurried past it, and soon the hoarse murmur of Scale Force woke on her ear, where the angry waterfall dashes from the crag-summit, while at its base the reflected sun-ray weaves beautiful bows in the web of silvery spray. And here, as she had stood with him watching her kine drink in the smooth pool below, where the flood glides

onward, she had seemed to him as some fairy essence of light and beauty that had emerged from that glittering arch, akin to those angel forms that Milton pictures as hanging in smiles over the rainbow-span! But now that spray is but a melancholy vapour: the sun that should tint it in beauty is shrouded in the wide gloom around,—shrouded as the sun of Gertrude's happiness and Gertrude's smile;—and she flits now by that wild haunt, more like some fair Shade round the grave of parted joyousness and health.

But she snatched her thoughts from the darker dream that had awhile held her over the spot, as the savage echoes of the cliff now answered back the waking thunder, while the heavens became blacker and more overcast, as menacing a storm. She hastened her step to gain some shelter, ere its impending menace burst over her. To regain Lorton before it overtook her was impossible, yet on she hurried, determining to take refuge at the first spot, be it cavern or shed, that should offer itself. How those weird echoes seemed to shout at her, as if she had been some good as lovely spirit, that had trespassed on the grim boundary of a fellowship of foul fiends, rejoicing in their pandemonium!

As she hurried along, driven as it were by the blast, down the slanting cliff-side, she seemed a frail and beautiful flower upturned and whirled away

in those mad eddies. Cavern howled to cavern the tale of its storm-haunted depths, to which the winds lent a tongue ; while ever and anon those grim vaults were laid bare, at fearful intervals, by the blue lightning flakes that darted into them to lose themselves and there abide, as though they were flame-winged ministers of ill, that had hied to join the dark orgies of evil spirits like themselves within, and whose chorus spoke in storm and havoc, and winds of many voices—shrill, and loud, and desolate !

The mountain-torrent poured the big rain-flood in many a turbid cataract down the crag, and the fearful thunderpeal again boomed over the maze of elemental war, where yonder lake-waves held conflict with the wind that lashed them ; and see ! the hurricane tears up a loosened mass of the crag-side ; that, as it falls, drags along with it the trunk of some aged nodding tree, hastening to bury its top in the waters.

The lovely fugitive now hurried for shelter into the first recess the rock afforded her, and could scarcely repress a shriek as her entry was met by the ill-omened bird that is so often found making its lurking-place in these drear recesses. The raven flapped its heavy wings as it passed her with a hoarse croak, as if chiding her unbidden presence, and boding her “ little luck ” for the intru-

sion on his solitary retreat. It passed, and winged through the storm to an aged oak, whose bare gaunt arms stretched them out—a spectral perch for an inauspicious guest; and its lightning-scathed trunk seemed to rear it as though familiar with the flakes that coiled around it, so marked was it with lightning scars. Those flakes darted up it as some huge snake of glittering scales and rapid gliding volume, at one moment; at another, the lightning blazed in a wider sheet of light, shewing in ghastly illumination the tree and the bird of fate, that seemed, as it vented its hoarse croakings, to gather joy from the very hideousness of the situation where all was tempest, din, and elemental conflict around it. To witness it, you might have deemed that some spirit-imp of the storm, such as would have joyed the eyes of a Fuseli to contemplate, had taken on it the shape of that bird; and such have we seen amidst gloom, darkling as the present, haunting that melancholy steep called, from tenants such as this, “Raven’s Crag,”—where it frowns over the dun and lonesome waters of Thirlmere.

Gertrude kept her eyes “undelighted,” as Milton says, on this scene of savageness and tempest, for some little time, when she fancied she heard cries as of people in pursuit of some one that fled from them. She drew her cloak closely round

her, and hastened, regardless of the pelting storm, to an eminence close by, to which a kind of rude natural staircase in the rock afforded an ascent. The spot was well known to her. From this she was able to discern that her supposition had been right; and what is more, the men and the fugitive who was in advance of them, were running along the ridge, on a level with the eminence which she had just gained. She was not surprised at this, as the voices had been borne to her ear from above and with the wind; and had they proceeded from an opposite direction, it is more than probable that she would have lost them, however near they might be.

It appeared to her, in the hasty conjecture she drew, that the fugitive had bent his flight towards Lorton or Buttermere, judging by the direction in which he was hurrying. It was not long before he came up to her. That brow—that form—that eye—in an instant she recognised him! Despite the sailor's disguise he wore, she knew at a glance that it was the form of him who possessed her fondest wishes, as his lot awakened her deepest fears.

This was not a time to sink,—not a time for a spirit such as Gertrude's, strengthened too by affection, to sink! In an instant, all her thoughts were, how she might second his escape—how she

might baffle his pursuers. He had the start of them by a short distance. Her eye had not encountered his without meeting the recognition his look spoke. His foot seemed to falter as though he longed to stop, and rather surrender himself to his pursuers, than lose the opportunity thus unexpectedly offered, of speaking to her.

“Away !” she exclaimed, hastily, and perceiving his inclination—“Away ! speed on !—there ! down those steps—immediately below is a cave forming a passage through to the meer. Do not stop !” she added, with a look and cry of agony ; “but fly ! fly ! for your life—for me ! It is Gertrude urges you.”

“Can you yet love me ? can you forgive——”

“Yes, yes ! fly !” she interrupted, as she wrung her hands in agony.

Her words were not unheeded ; the descent was soon achieved ; the fugitive had quickly disappeared from the ken of his pursuers. They had seen him interchange, as they thought, a hasty word with the female whom they now expected to meet ; but she had withdrawn behind the projection of the rock beneath which, and winding down its side, was the descent which Hatfield (for it was himself) had taken.

As one of the men hurried to the brink, to observe which way the fugitive had gone, he little

recked that in the chasm below he looked upon his grave: some invisible hand dashed him from his balance down the steep! At the same moment the report of a gun sounded through the gloom on Gertrude's ear; but it was not heard by the other of her husband's pursuers, (for there had been two,)—he fell dead at her feet from a ball that had entered his breast.

Gertrude looked from her hiding-place to discover, if possible, from what hand the missile of death could have proceeded, when on the opposite height, and on the further side of the cleft, down which Hatfield had proceeded by the rock steps, and where the officer of justice had found an untimely grave, she recognised an old man, who appeared as though making, with what haste he could, to a descent on his side the chasm, in order, as it seemed to her, to reach the place of Hatfield's concealment.

She thought, at first, that there might be danger for her husband,—that perhaps the bullet which had dealt death to the myrmidon of justice had been discharged through mistake of its object, and had been intended for the fugitive; but she was relieved of this anxiety on seeing, after having hastened down the rock-steps with what speed she might, the figure of old Mike, who had now crossed the cleft by aid of an old broad trunk of a tree,

which served for a bridge. He was hastening towards the cavern-mouth where she now stood, and within which Hatfield was concealed.

“ Dear Mike !” she exclaimed, “ I know I speak to a friend in *you* !—He is safe !—he is here ! Let us lose no time in hastening from this spot, and let the first seaport we can come to be the direction of our steps.”

Earnestly, hurriedly she spoke, as the old mariner replied—“ Ay, ay ! so as the hounds of justice do not cross the path, that shall be our way ! Judge whether I do not love the boy,” he added, speaking of Hatfield by this designation, as was his wont, and which, too, in its familiarity, bespoke the old man’s affection,—“ Judge, I say, whether I love him or not, when I have placed my own neck in jeopardy to save him.”

But here they were joined by the fugitive, who grasped Mike’s hand, while he pressed Gertrude wildly to his heart, unable to speak for some time, to thank them for his deliverance. Gertrude hung almost lifeless on his neck.

“ This is giving your life for me indeed, Mike,” at length he said, for he had overheard Mike’s words. “ But I will not stir till we remove, as we best may, all causes of suspicion ;” and then, looking at the gun—“ I heard the report. Did you use this, then, for my preservation ?”

Mike nodded assent.

“ I thought so. Well ; there is not a moment to be lost ! Speed ; take away the remains of the man who has met his death from the ball, and consign him——”

And here he started, as the mangled figure of the other of his pursuers presented itself at the rock-base, where he had met his death-bed.

“ Start not !” said Gertrude, who had come to herself again, while Mike now left them to take up the body of the man he had shot. “ If the hand of a *wife* is not willing to sacrifice the life of him who is seeking the death of her husband, she deserves not the name !”

“ Gertrude ?”

“ Ay !” she continued, as her countenance in its noble animation spoke even more than her words ; “ it is Gertrude addresses you ; but not the Gertrude you left her—except in her truth to you,—but one who has been schooled by suffering to consider the world she had once looked on as a scene of happiness but a wilderness of pain !—to feel that she is but the ghost of her former self, haunting the spot of a former more happy existence !—to live no longer for herself, but for you !”

“ It is the same noble spirit still that speaks. Do not say you are altered, Gertrude. From the first moment I knew and loved you, I knew your spirit to be one of unshaken truth, sincerity, and

love! That beautiful cheek is paler indeed, and bitterly must I accuse myself that it is so; but that heart is warm, is glowing as ever in truth. It may know happiness less than it did; it may have been dimmed by a sadder shade; but the deep, the tender feeling, the truth, the love that would hazard life itself for the lost, abandoned, hunted fugitive——”

“It is my duty!” interrupted Gertrude, as she proceeded to speak with a calm resolution and dignified composure which evinced the nobleness of spirit within her, unawed by the difficulties, unshrinking before the perils, that beset her husband’s path. “It is my duty,” she said, “to feel as I do. I am one with yourself—made one by all laws, human and divine. By a bond such as this am I sacredly pledged to shield you from ill—to suffer with you!—and though all the world desert and persecute you, it is the very crisis in which *I* should stand firmly by your side.”

“More than woman!—more than wife! My guardian spirit and aid-divine! can I say how devoted, solemnly as ardently, my heart is towards you, when I feel that I am worthy less to love than adore you. You can, then, forgive—forget what I am!”

“Have I not said so in what I have already expressed? But away,—the time is precious! No word you have ever expressed of hope to me, that

you might surmount the perils that beset you, has been lost on me. Your letter has been read again and again, and still new hope has been gleaned from it, that escape might yet be secured you. You there held out prospects of happiness, of content, if the barrier of escape were once passed. Let us struggle, then, to pass it now. This gloom and confusion of the elements befriends our flight. It has already befriended yours thus far. You were hurrying in a direction that might have been fatal——”

“I was trying,” he interrupted, earnestly, “to take Lorton in my flight, in order to catch a glimpse of you!”

In fact, Quandish’s surmise had been right; and the alarm of Capperhill or Hatfield having been raised by Miss Howbiggen’s inquisitiveness, he instantly fled from town, in this direction, and with this object.

“I surmised so,” replied Gertrude; “but see—Heaven has sent me beforehand to your path!”

“And yet more, to preserve me—to snatch me from my pursuers! Be still my guardian angel! In the path you direct I will follow! But stay—here is Mike.”

At this moment the old mariner returned, with the grim load of the body which had been deprived of life beneath his unerring aim. The remains of

the other of his late pursuers were extricated by Hatfield from the bottom of the cleft where it laid; its rugged bed being one of those channels scooped by the winter torrents in the cliff, peculiar to rocky districts; and the mountain maiden led the way through the cavern, whose opposite end led out upon the lake.

With no other funeral lament than that which was raised by the yelling winds and sleet, the corpses were consigned with hollow plash to the deep dark grave of the waters; and ere the circles had died away over the spot where they sunk, the fugitives were fast urging their way beneath the cavern brows and rugged peaks of the cliff. These formed a savage canopy, at once to screen them from observation, should any further pursuit be advancing, and from the fury also of the storm that raged above them. Their steps took a north-westerly direction, it being their intention to reach the sea-coast as soon as possible, and take ship ostensibly for Bristol or Plymouth, their ultimate object being to cross the channel to the Continent.

At the first convenient opportunity, Gertrude looked forward to writing to Mr. Fenton, in order to quiet any alarm that might have arisen in his mind, at her protracted absence from Lorton, and to inform him of the step she had taken, as far as might be consistent with the safety of her husband.

At the suggestion of old Mike, too, it was resolved that she should disguise herself as well as Hatfield, in the garb of a seaman; and this was to be effected at the first village they should deem it safe to stop at that night, and which was at least nine or ten miles distant.

We will here snatch a moment to say a word accounting for Mike's presence, a little while ago, so opportunely to the relief of Hatfield. He was taking, then, one of his solitary rambles, rifle in hand, to aim at the stray eagle that sometimes was seen to wheel round the pike-summits in the neighbourhood. On his way, he had witnessed (previously to Gertrude's discovery of it) the pursuit that was being made after her husband, and accordingly hastened onward to his assistance. We may add, that since we last met him, he had remained at his dismal, solitary retreat, the mountain cell, where we have erewhile found him. His thoughts had constantly been engaged on Hatfield and his lovely bride, to see whom he had frequently wandered to Lorton, sharing the interest we have already witnessed as shewn her by Esdaile and Golefield.

But to return to the fugitives. Onward they hied—in hope, in fear, in haste; Destiny dogging them at the heels!—the eyes of Fate resting darkly on them!

CHAPTER X.

“ Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and howlets nightly cry.
And now he saw an unco' sight,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns,
Wi' mair o' awefu'.”

BURNS.

ERE nightfall they gained the village where Gertrude was to assume her sailor's disguise. At the first break of dawn they sallied forth again on their fearful track, little deeming that their movements were matter of espial. Precautionary injunctions had been given through every considerable village in the district, to mark all persons that passed, under any circumstances tending to excite suspicion. The privacy sought by the whole party, and the change of dress of one of them, however much they imagined observation had been eluded, did not pass without comment, and it is probable they would have been stopped and questioned had they not made their escape at the very earliest

period at which light was afforded them for proceeding. They hurried along by devious paths over a weary though romantic way of moorland and crag.

At last they came to a spot where three roads met, called in the country a "want-way," and here arose a bitter perplexity as to which of them led to the coast; for there was no direction, no friendly finger-post to point out to them an escape from their difficulty. Mike himself, who was the only one of the party that knew anything of this particular district, was in a state of uncertainty no less than his companions. The roads, so far from running at different points of the compass from each other, most provokingly ran nearly parallel to each other for some distance, their ultimate declinations, wherever they might take place, being as yet equally unapparent and uncertain.

"Well! take any direction rather than delay longer, so as it lies away from the quarter whence we have come!" said Gertrude in an agony of impatience greater than even that of Hatfield himself.

"It is a 'toss up,' said Mike, "as to which it is best to take;" and then, after a moment's pause, he continued, according to his usual superstitious turn of mind,—“The right is the luckiest; let us take the right.”

So the right branch was, in accordance with this sage divination, pursued without further deliberation, except that Hatfield remarked—"Had we been on horseback, we would have flung the rein on our horses' necks and let them choose for us. I have often been thus conducted safely out of difficulties of the way, from which I should certainly not have known of myself how to get extricated."

"Ay! God is with the dumb creatures," replied Mike, "more than with men! All our reason cannot act so much to the purpose at times as their instinct. Reason can work (look you) better, no doubt, on movements known, planned beforehand, and understood; but where all is doubt and uncertainty, give me the instinct of the dumb creatures for the surest chance of going safely. It is God's guidance leads them, unconscious as they are of it."

So saying, they pursued their way across a dun and barren moor, with sable clumps of Scotch fir scattered over it.

The fancy of a German wizard might welcome here unearthly shapes through the murky air, and catch the fearful echoes of the fiend huntsmen, in the melancholy blasts that sweep it. It would have made you shiver to cast your ken round the weird and darkling bound. A fen-fire started across their swampy path, and danced before them for a

brief space over the peat-bed, in a sort of unearthly glee, as they looked at it with thoughts little cheerful on their part; for it seemed like a light held out by some ill-spirit to lure them from the fair track of safety, and betray them to harm and doom.

So thought Hatfield, as he kept his eyes on the narrow beaten path that wound through the fern, and night shade, and wild broom, as they passed, avoiding the wilder bound to which the foul spirit seemed to beckon him astray for his destruction in that false glare.

On they went, their track now winding along the brink of a chasm deep and dark as the gulf of Futurity, and Hatfield thought it was the darkest thing of which he had ever been conscious, except the bosom's gulf where Guilt's dark secrets lie.

They came to a forest, where the grey wan light of dawn was breaking, and the leaves were shivering in the raw morning air. That dim maze—it looked as if the spirits of the dead claimed it as their grim trysting spot, to plain over past woes, whether they gibbered under the chill light of the moon or beneath the shroud of fearful darkness.

What a scene of desolation spread before the fugitives! Those bare forest trunks as they rose far and wide seemed to form a kind of natural mausoleum over the death of all joy and bloom of

earth, languishing as she did beneath its wintry pall. The comrades shuddered as they now looked up where the shrill blast whistled round a gibbet, and shook the chains that rattled with a heavy, dull clank against the trunk by the way-side. The wind shifted the position of the skeleton shape which the chains held, and placed it facing them, and as the ray fitfully glistened over the eye-sockets, it seemed to glare on them in ghastly speculation. As Hatfield looked at it, it seemed to grin in horrible mockery of himself, and still his heart whispered an ominous warning, which he tried in vain to subdue as he made an effort to speak with jocularly ; but how forced it was, the haggard, painful expression of the brow, that ill corresponded with the smile on the lip, declared. What aspect in our human feature so assimilates to that of fiends, as the fell distortion of unnatural joy !

“Thou grim chatterer,” he said to the skeleton, “does thy gibbering mean that thou wouldst call me to thy side? How can I answer thee? Who can tell but that I may one day take my place by thee, and yield thee grin for grin in ghastly fellowship !”

“Whisht, man, and leave your unseemly jests !—pray, rather, for better destinies !” said old Mike, in the reverential and lowered tone of superstitious alarm ; “whisht, I tell you ; you never know how

near danger may be, nor how near an evil prediction may be to its fulfilment. Never tempt the powers above by a jest. Look at those two ravens hard by—they seem to tell you so. Get to the right hand, you sable destiny-mongers! Ay,—won't ye?" he added, as he looked at the birds of ill-omen, who sat on the bough where the skeleton of the gibbeted felon swung, and croaked out a sort of hideous chorus in concert with the moan of the blast, and the dead sound of the clattering bones and clanking irons.

The birds stirred not. They seemed to Mike as if marking some dark decree of an impending doom. And scarcely had they passed the spot, when Gertrude, looking round, said—

"I think, as far as the dim light will let me, I see some one at the head of the forest walk."

"Where?" asked Mike and Hatfield together, turning simultaneously round, and looking intently into the wan and dubious distance.

"I feel for all the world," said Mike, "as if some spectre dogged our way."

"I should be very glad, Mike, if it were nothing more substantial!" said Hatfield, with a forced smile, which still vainly strove against a certain melancholy presentiment of ill that it was difficult to surmount or subdue.

"I hope," he continued, with the same lip-mirth

that was not of the heart,—“ I hope it may not be some figure of flesh and blood set upon our track, with others too, doubtless, in his rear. As for spectres, why, this spot seems to be quite suited to such company, and I should not complain at falling in with them. Here is their domain ! their ‘ fee simple ’—eh, Mike ?—and you, Gertrude,—you would rather meet an army of spirits, or even fiends, than a single hostile spirit of the race of man, or a single fiend in human shape ? ”

But Gertrude replied not, except as to what she discerned of the figure in the distance, whose movements she was too intent on tracing to heed any other speculations.

“ I have lost it now,” she said, her eyes being still fixed on the spot ; “ I lost it just where that clump of oaks runs out into the way, and makes it wind round their circuit—but there—there it is again ! ”

And Mike thought he did see a figure just shew itself from behind the trees, and as hastily withdraw. “ But my eyes are dim,” he said, “ and fancy does much where the senses fail.”

“ I should prefer at once,” said Hatfield, “ repairing to the spot and ascertaining if any one is in reality watching our track ; for such I should conceive to be the case if, as you imagine, you saw any one look after us and then withdraw, on per-

ceiving we observed his movements. Could I lay hands on any lurking ruffian that dogged our way, by Heavens I would bind him to the trunk of the first tree, and let him console himself for his rashness as he best might, by watching the sun rise over yonder——”

But here a clump of horses' hoofs woke on their ear, and Mike at this moment having turned his head round in the direction of the sound, perceived that which occasioned him to exclaim—

“Fly for your life, down yonder alley through the thicket, to the left! It is the nearest outlet for escape! They are upon us!—I see them!—fly for your life!—never mind us—we are safe!”

It took but a moment to persuade Hatfield to hasten down the narrow-winding path he was directed to pursue. He had scarcely left his companions two minutes, before three men on horseback now rode up to them, and after looking searchingly at them, asked “where was their late companion?” As Mike was about to say, “that he had no other companion than the lad (for such Gertrude in her disguise seemed to be) with him,” the man that had addressed him, stopped him short—

“Your denial proves to me that the person who has just left you is the man I want; I saw him leave you a moment past, and he cannot be far away.”

"It must be down that narrow opening he went," said the other fellow, "for he could not have vanished by any other passage from this broad walk we saw him in, not a moment or two ago. Do you and Bill," he continued, turning to the third myrmidon of the party, "go down the path; it is wide enough for one man to ride along, and leads out to the forest border. Make haste now, and you must have him."

Mike felt a shiver come over his spirit at these words, as much as to warn him that the fated day was soon to be at hand which he had so long fearfully awaited. He remained in anxious expectation, to see whether or not the men would emerge from the forest shades with their captive. A pistol shot now echoed through the wood, and spoke an affray was going on. The officers had, therefore, found the object of their pursuit. Mike's and Gertrude's anxiety increased; their hearts beat faster and faster; the old mariner could scarcely support the anguished spirit of his lovely charge; indeed, he had a hard struggle to maintain in supporting his own.

They walked restlessly along the path towards the passage Hatfield had taken, and away from the officer who remained behind. In a short time the sound of a horse's hoofs, beating aside the bushes, arrested their attention, and from an outlet a

little higher up the main avenue than that which the officers had entered, who should appear riding forward but Hatfield himself. He urged his horse from the wood covert full against the officer who remained in the avenue, and put an end to all resistance on his part by shooting him dead on the spot. By this act he merely anticipated a similar intended assault on the part of the officer, who had raised his pistol to check Hatfield's career.

This circumstance had scarcely taken place, than urging his steed by Gertrude's side, he stooped from the saddle-bow, and snatching her up by her slender waist, placed her before him, and away he galloped down the dun forest-glade, and was quickly lost along its sallow-tinted vista, beyond the reach of his pursuers.

"God bless you, Mike!—God bless you!" he cried, as he started onwards; "we meet on the coast—at Ravenglass—you know the—" and the words were lost to the ear of the old mariner, who hastily replied—

"Ay, ay!—away, away!—for your life!"

The echoes of his steed's clamp, no less than his words, had now faded on Mike's ear, as he was proceeding to make the best of his way from the forest.

The baffled and dismayed myrmidons of justice,

who had entered the thicket to secure their prey, were now returned desperately wounded from the affray that had plainly taken place. The one was leading the single horse left between them, and on which his companion was placed helpless, as if from a fall sustained in some struggle, or more probably from the pistol shot heard by Gertrude and Mike.

How this might be, however, the old mariner little concerned himself about learning, his whole anxiety being now to betake himself to the spot on the coast which had been already agreed on for the embarkation of Hatfield. With this view, he had already made his way (as we have just witnessed) from the avenue, and was deep in the wood thicket, speeding his way to the forest border, before the officers had returned from their late pursuit of Hatfield. Dashing the tear away from his eye as he went along, he exclaimed—

“God preserve him; he deserves to escape; he is a brave fellow. But it is all of no avail. They must have him, I fear, at last. Not the bravest can fight against his doom for ever. His destiny must conquer him at last!”

CHAPTER XI.

“ If his prayer
Be granted, a faint meteor will arise,
Lighting him o’er the deep . . .
But, that shout

Bodes——

“ *Mah.* Evil, doubtless, like all human sounds.”
SHELLEY.

“ DID you say, Sir, you were going by the Glasgow packet, Sir?—or the Bristol, Sir?” asked a smirking, prating waiter at the inn at Ravensglass.

“ I said neither the one nor the other, friend ; trouble not thyself, I pray thee, about my movements,” replied an elderly gentleman, habited in Quaker costume, but bearing a singular resemblance to the venerable Mr. Jackson, which we remember first of all exciting our curiosity at Buttermere church some time ago, and whom we afterwards met seated on the style by the wayside subsequently to Hatfield’s escape from the church ;

and lastly, whom we witnessed in conversation with Woodsland at Windermere. Having thus, as he thought, turned aside the meddlesome inquiries of the waiter, he addressed some words to a female, also in the guise of one of the society of Friends, and who, we must suppose, was the old gentleman's daughter. But the waiter was not so easily to be silenced, being as officious a varlet as ever made mischief or occasioned annoyance by his impertinence.

"Oh, beg pardon, Sir; I only thought, Sir, that if you were for Bristol, Sir, you would not be sorry to understand that you may have the company of a gentleman who——"

"Nay, nay, friend, I am bound for another quarter than Bristol. I thank thee much, but would be sorry for thee to trouble thyself about my movements. Esther, my dear," he continued, turning to his daughter, "it is almost time for us to be settling our account here. Waiter, let us know what we have to pay."

"Certainly, Sir; yes, Sir; but don't suppose, Sir, that it is any trouble to accommodate any gentleman in our house. Oh, no, Sir; and so, Sir, thinking possibly you might be going in the same direction as the gentleman down stairs, I thought I would just ask you, Sir, in order to acquaint him——"

"Thanks to thee, friend! thanks to thee."

—"For he asked me if I knowed whether any one was a-going aboard either of the packets. I means, Sir, the Glasgow or Bristol—he might have said the Liverpool too, Sir; but I'm not quite certain, Sir."

"Nay, nay! never mind, friend, never mind!"

"Well, Sir, he says, says he, 'I'm a-going myself by the Bristol, and would gladly join any one going the same way;' so, says I, 'I believe, now you speak of it, there *is* a gentleman a-going! but, if you please, Sir, I'll just step up and inquire?'"

"Thou art very good, very good, friend—I much thank thee,—but would more particularly be obliged to thee if thou wouldst just at present let me have my account. Esther, my child."

"In one moment, Sir," interrupted the waiter, "'but perhaps you would like to see the gentleman up stairs,' says I to the gentleman down stairs. 'Oh yes,' says he; 'I shall be very happy, if I am not intruding.' 'Oh, no intrusion, I'm sure,' says I—"

"Really, friend, thou art the most accommodating ministrant I ever met yet at any inn in the three kingdoms."

"Not at all, Sir! always happy to please the gentlemen that puts up at our inn. 'Well, and so,' says the gentleman down-stairs, 'the coffee-room is very full; suppose you mention, with my compliments to the gentleman above, that I will join him

if we are to be fellow-passengers,' and so up I comes, just to propose—”

“Upon my word, both thou, my friend, and the worthy gentleman down stairs, are most kind; but just let me recall to thy memory that I have informed thee I am not about to take my passage to Bristol; and yet more, that I have twice asked thee for my account.”

“Beg a thousand pardons, Sir, for detaining you one moment more than you desired, only was happy to accommodate. Bill shall be brought in a moment, Sir. I'll only just step down and prevent the gentleman from coming up, for the coffee-room was very crowded, and he seemed glad to shift his quarters.”

So saying, he bustled out of the room, and the Quaker and his daughter were at length relieved of his troublesome presence; for, in truth, his officiousness seemed fraught with some little danger to them, to judge by the words now hastily addressed by the worthy Obadiah to his fair child, Esther.

“We have not a moment to delay. See! there is Mike's signal. Look towards the sea, and you will discern a little boat with a small red pennon flitting over the bow. He waits to row us out to the first vessel we can come up to, and bound for any coast but this!—the further off the better!”

“I see it, I see it,” exclaimed Esther, as she

pressed closer to her side the arm on which she leaned, while they now hastened from the room down stairs, hoping to avoid the threatened visitation of the "gentleman below," who found the coffee-room so inconveniently crowded. Scarcely, however, had they set foot on the landing-place outside the door when they were met by the prating, smirking waiter again, who, with an officious grin on his countenance, commenced—

"Beg pardon, Sir, but the 'gentleman below' said he thought he had the pleasure of your acquaintance, when I described you to him, and——"

"Nay, nay, friend!—I know him not!—I know him not."

"But I know you!" said a voice proceeding from a small room, the door of which was open, at the side of the landing-place where this brief and hasty colloquy between Obadiah and the waiter took place, and the former, as he looked round, recognised in the face of the speaker the identical effigies of—Quandish.

"Nay, nay!" continued Obadiah, now proceeding to brush down stairs with an expedition surprising in one of his years, and appearing rather to support his youthful daughter, than seek support from her, "I tell thee, friend, I know thee not, nor canst thou know me."

“Ha, ha!” ejaculated Quandish, with an insulting laugh, “we shall see if we are not better acquainted than you would, perhaps, find it agreeable to acknowledge!” And scarcely had the words escaped his lips than out stepped from the same little room two or three fellow myrmidons of justice, who now pounced on their prey, while they swelled the chorus of Quandish’s insulting laugh; and Hatfield, (for it was himself,) Hatfield, the as yet indomitable Hatfield, found himself at length secured beyond the chance of any further escape.

He was not taken, however, until after a desperate struggle, which, of course, called every inmate and sojourner in the house to the fray on the staircase. But all resistance was in vain; the last of the Protean shapes that the captive had assumed of a Quaker was stripped from him, and exhibited him in his own proper person.

Adroit in his escapes, as we have witnessed him, no less than in his transformations, the hour was at length come when he should be finally secured.

Gertrude, for the fair Quakeress was no other than herself, clung to him as the officers were now about to drag him away, in order to convey him ultimately to the nearest magistrate for his committal. She was at length removed from him insensible, and when she came to herself again, she

opened her eyes to meet the anxious inquiring glance of old Mike, who bent over her, where she was lying on the seaman's humble pallet in the hut where they now both were.

It appears that Mike having, according to the agreement previously made between himself and Hatfield, repaired to Ravenglass, had hoisted the little pennon from the boat in which he was to have conveyed him and Gertrude to any packet sailing on its way from England.

Thus far we have already been able to glean ; it remains to be mentioned that Mike having waited much beyond the period at which his signal had been hoisted, began to apprehend danger, and accordingly, consigning his boat to the care of a brother seaman, he hastened up to the inn, which was situated close upon the sea-shore, and was speedily made acquainted with all the circumstances that had taken place relative to the capture of Hatfield.

The first object now of his care was Gertrude. He had taken charge of her on her being separated from the arms of her husband, where she was held by him till taken away by main force, and amidst the brutal insults of Quandish.

From this moment had the good old mariner watched over her, with the tender attention of a parent. He had taken her to a hut which he pre-

pared for her reception, and to which he resorted usually on his visits to Ravenglass, which were not unfrequent, to see his old comrades of the sea.

As he would watch over her in her misery and insensibility, the good old man would say, as the tear stole into his eye—"Ay! did I not say so? The storm has come down at last!—and the vessel must go to wreck! To think, just at the moment when escape seemed sure—when we were making way, with wind and tide in our favour, towards a port of safety,—to think that at this 'nick o' time' the 'yellow flag' should have been hoisted, and the rovers should have borne down on us—made us strike sails and sunk our craft! after so many a goodly chase in which we had outstripped them! Well, well; it was to be!"

And here the old man's attention was directed towards offering what rude consolation he might to the unhappy wife of him whose fate he lamented. By the assiduity of Mike, and the attentions he procured for her from other quarters, Gertrude gradually rallied; but if there was one circumstance more than another that tended to reanimate and encourage her, it was the whisper of hope breathed to her by Mike, that she might yet possibly afford some succour to the condition, fearful as indeed it was, of her husband.

To cherish but the inkling of such a thought

was sufficient, in a bosom like Gertrude's, to urge her to the resolve of attempting to act upon it. If the old man, indeed, in his own mind tacitly confessed the undertaking to be desperate, yet, when he perceived that its attempt was all that gave a return of strength or spirit to his lovely charge, he at once determined to aid her in it, and accompany her in its execution.

The nature of this resolve must be left to our ensuing pages to explain.

CHAPTER XII.

“I am not yet of Percy’s mind, the Hotspur of the north : he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, ‘Fie upon this quiet life! I want work!’ ‘Oh, my sweet Harry,’ says she, ‘how many hast thou killed to-day?’ ‘Give my roan horse a drench,’ says he, and answers, ‘some fourteen!’ an hour after—‘a trifle, a trifle!’”

SHAKESPEARE, HENRY IV.

HAPPY are we, living as we do, at the present day, in being “heirs” to the stores of wealth, scientific or moral, which the labour, enterprise, invention, and ingenuity of our predecessors have accumulated, and left us! At once we step into the possession of, and enjoy securely, what has been achieved with how much hazard and uncertainty! how much cost and care! Happy spendthrifts, we help ourselves largely to the store, little considering the pains and time exhausted in its acquisition!

The citizen, for example, launches into a steamer all his little cockney brood, and transports them, at

a trifling cost and in a short space of time, to a distance where health and recreation may be sought, mocking at the foul fogs of the smoky city, and placing the doctor's calling at a discount! Little reckes he that he is reaping the fruit of efforts, to complete which, science, with "careful brow," has thought and toiled over for years.

Again he plods down the spacious ways of the modern Babylon, and takes, as a matter of course, (reckless varlet!)—ay, takes as a matter of course, all the comfort and luxury which her goodly pavements, her spacious areas, and costly edifices, delighting the eye, present! Little does he bestow one thought of consideration (such is the selfishness of our common nature) on the pains it has cost to rear this world of comfort and luxury. Little does he picture the "immane barathirum" of the dark narrow ways that erewhile existed, imperfectly lighted with dingy little oil lamps, serving rather to render darkness visible than expel the gloom. How *can* he, when his senses are dazzled by the gas-illumination that blazes through the town, to shew spacious pavements skirting the pomp of palaces? He is lost in the glitter and gaiety; and, selfish as he is, may perhaps be excused his forgetfulness of the dinginess, inconvenience, and discomfort of a former day, in the cheerfulness, convenience, and decoration, of the scene imme-

diately around him. It is to an imaginative mind, however, no small subject of interest and amusement, to call up the labyrinth of ungainliness and perplexity of the past—to picture to itself the painful plodders through slough-beset, dark, and difficult passes, which the mighty British Babylon, at the period of our story, for the most part exhibited.

Truly, if the London of to-day may be styled Babylon from its splendour, it might be styled “Babel” from its “confusion” of a past date; and to this Babel, then, we once again return.

Accordingly, we proceed to take our course towards St. James’s Park. Not, (as at the present day,) do we pass through a space of pomp, looked down upon by palaces,—the Athenæum on one side, the United Service Club House on the other; northward, the splendid vista of goodly dwellings; and southward, the façade called Carlton Terrace. Not, when arrived within the precincts of the park, are we met by terraces of pomp and beauty, fronting a sweep of palaces, and justifying the title, “Babylonian.”

Nay, such is the power of association, that it were an easy matter to imagine ourselves in the ancient Babylon, were we but to place the procession in the “Semiramide” upon that august balustrade, with Pasta for the Babylonish queen,

and Rossini's magnificent strains sounding in our ears !

But away with these visions, and turn we to the dark, melancholy swamp which St. James's Park, at the period of our story, presented, and which now meets us, instead of the decorated maze of mingled palace and garden to which a later day has given birth.

It was, then, along the border of the " Birdcage Walk" that a person was walking in quest, gentle reader, of—adventures !—how well he was calculated for such a pursuit or not, let his appearance and character testify. There are many yet living who will recognise the portrait (we dare say) before it is finished. He was about six feet two, in the first instance ; of a most menacing aspect, and rendered formidable by the invasion, over nearly all his face, of a pair of huge bushy black whiskers ; his nose was a tremendous aquiline one, as fiery at its end as his temper, and seemed to blaze forth a challenge to the whole world, of " pull me if you dare, and I'll dash your brains out !"

Yes, gentle reader, you may start ; but the menace just suggested is no spark of fancy, lit up, as you might suppose, by the said blazing feature, but a dangerous reality, at once vouched for by the huge club brandished in the hand of its bearer, and denominated by him his " walking-stick !" and with truth might it be called so, for it occasioned

most persons who came near it to "walk" off from the perilous neighbourhood of "the noble lord" (for such he was) who wielded it, as fast as their legs could carry them.

Fast, however, as they were willing to secure their retreat, it was difficult at all times to avoid being overtaken by our noble adventurer, who was then certain either to imagine a cause of offence or pick a quarrel.

His stalwart wrist, as he brandished his "walking-stick," was in a constant fidget to exercise itself in the amusement of pommelling any antagonist he could find; at least, so it should seem, to judge by the twirl he perpetually gave it, very much as an old player at the "quarter-staff" might do, or an Irish kern, twirling his "shilaleh," as he rushes from a "shebeen," or whiskey shop, to knock the brains out of a tithe collector. This "pretty little rattan" was, it should be observed for the fidelity of the picture, about as thick as a stout man's wrist, and well knotted for nearly a foot and a half upwards from the spike which tipped it at the bottom.

Imagine, in a civilized state of society, a member of a Christian community—though we cannot add a civilized being himself—bearing about a weapon of such a nature. At any rate, the picture is consistent—the man was worthy of the instrument, and the instrument of the man, and they were ac-

cordingly inseparable ! To look at the character in question, you would imagine he was some savage, dressed indeed in the garb of an humanized race, though with certain eccentric deviations from the prescribed form—so complete an Orson did he appear.

His waistcoat was made of shaggy bear-skin, double-breasted, and with a double row of mother-of-pearl buttons. This was apparent when the huge, thick fur-collared surtout was flung open,—which it generally was, in order to give more play to the arm of the noble combatant, in the encounters, so many of which it was his delight to seek. He was the terror of the footpads all round the western portion, in particular, of the metropolis, and Hercules himself never held a more decisive *argumentum baculinum* in his hand, to quell a marauding or insolent spirit, than the noble Orson. Peace be to his manes !—a pleasanter man, when he chose not to take affront, (mark !) never entered a social circle !

He was at times remarkable for his dandyism of dress ; and his high red-heeled boots (the fashion of the time) and gilt spurs, quite *à la chevalier*, afforded a singular contrast to his savage, menacing aspect. But these moods of forbearance, and “ lucid intervals ” of humanization, were but temporary. He was too glad to relapse into the fierce

and adventure-loving being we have depicted him.

The fact is, he was endowed with immense strength, and found pleasure accordingly in the exercise of it, as is the case universally, whether in physical or moral endowments; for, whatever talent we feel ourselves adepts in, we have a concomitant pleasure in exercising.

Now, in the instance of the noble lord, this would have been very well if he would but have confined himself to battering a brick wall; but he found no mark so agreeable for the exercise of his battering-ram of a bludgeon, as the numskulls of his majesty's liege subjects; and which, if he sometimes found them perhaps little less hard than brick-bats, yet he can scarcely stand exculpated for making so free in trying his strength on them. Conflict, in fact, was his element; forbearance and tranquillity, a real and painful effort to him.

Of course, however embarrassing his society was found, generally speaking, he was on his good behaviour at Carlton House in particular, where we shall perhaps in due time fall in with him: howbeit a disciple of Messrs. Gall and Spurzheim would, even there, have pronounced at a glance that he possessed the organ of combativeness.

Such was he in person and garb. His boots, on the present occasion, it may be imagined, had not

the dandy feature of red-heels. No; he wore stout, thick shoes, whose hob-nails and iron tips imprinted formidable marks in the mud of the Birdcage Walk, and shewed the dimensions of the wearer, akin to the mould of a Hercules or Polypheme. “*Ex pede Herculem !*”

His eyes glared, like a tiger’s, through the obscurity of the hour, for it was twilight, (his favourite period for adventure-seeking,) and their fire was only equalled by the effulgence of his nose, which was a very beacon of affray wheresoever he moved.

Coarse blue trousers of shaggy cloth completed his nether man; and thus equipped and armed, he stalked forward, angry that no wandering thief, or roysterer from a coffee-house, had crossed his path. However, he had not remained long in this painful state of impatience before a cry as of a female voice reached his ear.

So far from exciting any “tender regret,” on his part, that helplessness should be assailed, our hero was only delighted at the thought that violence would be chastised by his arm. It was not long before he arrived at the spot whence the cry had proceeded. He saw a young female struggling with a man. One blow of his “rattan” felled the ruffian, who was seizing (as his lordship supposed) the girl’s purse, and laid him sprawling insensible on the ground.

“The chain!—the golden chain!” she cried; “the man who has run off, has got it with him!”

This was new delight to the noble Hercules. A few rapid strides soon brought him up to his adversary.

“Scoundrel! give up that chain!” nor did the man wait for a second summons, for he flung the chain backwards, where it adhered in the mud, and glittered so brilliantly, that for the moment the noble lord’s attention was called to it from the fugitive ruffian. While he stooped to pick it up the man endeavoured to make good his escape, but was not permitted to do this, until his pursuer had succeeded in giving him a cut with the “rattan” that laid open the side of his face and temples, just as the thief was running round the corner at Storey’s Gate.

“There is a slight mark of my remembrance for you, my friend, which I think you will carry with you till your dying day!” said his noble chastiser. “And now for the poor girl. Let us see how she fares.”

So saying, he returned to the spot where the damsel he had rescued, like a knight of old, was standing. The ruffian he had first punished had in the interval of his absence so far recovered as to be able to crawl away, dreading the return of his

assailant and the possible approach also of the police.

The first words she exclaimed, after expressing how much she was beholden to her stout deliverer, were, "The chain!—and have you been able to recover that?" When she saw it in his hand, she renewed her expressions of gratitude for his assistance, and testified much joy at its recovery.

"Why, one would imagine," he said, as he restored it her, and assisted in adjusting it round her neck, whence it had been torn,—“one would imagine it was an amulet or talisman. I suppose the jewel I saw glittering in the cross attached to it must be some magic opal at least! What is the meaning of this, my fair creature? Tell me its history; which is also, doubtless, your own.”

As she was about to reply, an interruption took place, in consequence of the approach of an old man with some of the police, or rather watchmen, whom it appears he had hastened to fetch, in order to lend assistance to the efforts he had first of all made in repelling the ruffians. This, indeed, he had successfully done, old as he was, for some time, and they had withdrawn; but it should seem that on his leaving his fair comrade, to bring the police up to the spot, they had watched his movements and returned to the assault.

"You are her father, I suppose?" said Lord

Dromedford, (such was his name,) as the old man advanced.

“I would willingly supply the place of one, as far as loving the dear child and keeping her from harm,” he replied, as he embraced the fair object of Lord Dromedford’s succour.

“Well,” continued his lordship; “it will be satisfactory to you to know that the scoundrels who were robbing her have decamped; and one of them, I think, has received a mark across his face, by which you (addressing himself to the watchmen) will readily be enabled to detect him, if you look about you.”

“Ay, ay!” replied the foremost of the watchmen; “your lordship has left the marks of your hand-writing on the mazards of not a few of the willins! I warrant you, they’ll find it hard work to rub them out again. But come along, old gentleman—you and your daughter—out of this place—we’ll put you in your right road!” So saying, the watchman led the way from the park towards the Westminster outlet, followed by the whole party.

The reason of the girl’s anxiety for the recovery of the chain was explained by her, in obedience to Lord Dromedford’s inquiries; and from the interest and feeling it excited even in the “rude breast” of such an Orson as the noble savage, it may be sup-

posed to be of no common character, nor involving consequences of any ordinary feature. What these were, the subsequent events of our story will testify.

“ You, then,” he replied, at the conclusion of her relation,—“ you are the wife of that ill-fated man? By that countenance, which I thought so lovely when I first came up to your assistance, I am not surprised to find in you the celebrated ‘flower of Buttermere,’ whose name has been so much in the mouths of all persons since this unhappy affair has transpired. For your sake, I wish Hatfield all success in the object of this your expedition. I am myself to be at a party at the Prince of Wales’s, and will not fail to urge every argument I can in favour of your suit,—a noble one for you to make—the reprieve of a husband. Hatfield is a brave as well as talented fellow, and I declare I wish he may escape! As for you, my good old man,” he continued, “ the kindness you have shewn this lovely and unhappy creature are much to your honour, and if it is in my power to serve you in any way, I shall be happy.”

“ I thank you much, my Lord,” replied the old mariner, (for it is needless to explain that it was Mike himself,) “ but you cannot serve me more than in serving her, or the errand we are both come on.”

And here it was explained, that after their arrival in town, the first object of their inquiry was the Home Secretary's office, for the purpose of furthering their petition and suit for the reprieve already mentioned. Hence it was that we find them on the spot where they now are, having taken the direction of the Green Park, and subsequently St. James's, in order to arrive by the shortest way from their quarters in town (situate near the former park) at the official residence of the minister.

On Mike's statement of this circumstance, their noble companion at once proceeded with them to the Home Secretary's office; but as it was late, the private secretary, to whom his lordship himself spoke, gave him little hopes of having the petition looked at till the following day,—the minister being at "the House." However, the petition was left. Meantime, it was agreed upon by the whole party that an application for the desired object should be made in a quarter where private interest appeared to hold out more hope of success than any official clemency.

The circumstances of this application we are not yet at liberty to unfold, nor the quarter in which it was to be made; suffice it to say, it was to be made by Gertrude herself, and was connected with the history of the "precious chain" which, it has been seen, she prized so much, and which her

noble rescuer, consequently, was almost justified in designating a " talisman."

" I only hope," he said to Gertrude, as he now took leave of her, " that the interest of myself and that of the person, too, to whom you are about to apply, may together prevail on his Royal Highness."

So saying, he directed the watchman to see Mike and his lovely charge conducted safely back to their quarters, which were situated at the furthest (that is, the western) end of Piccadilly, and at no very great distance from Devonshire House ; hence we find that, in their late progress through the parks, they did but follow a track contiguous to their spot of abode—the Green Park almost facing the lodging they had taken. What motives could have induced them to fix on this particular quarter for their brief sojourn, will be made more apparent in due time.

The watchmen did not proceed on the duty consigned them by his lordship, of re-conducting Mike and Gertrude back to their abode, without asking " to drink his lordship's health," as may be imagined.

" Ah ! you were the fellows I thrashed by *mis-take* the other night, are you not ?"

" Ay, ay, my Lord, that we were !" exclaimed both the men at once ; " I can shew the bruises still !"

“Ah, I dare say! Well; never mind that,” said the noble “punisher-general,” whose “amiable failing” it was sometimes to lay about him with his bludgeon indiscriminately on both the innocent and the guilty, and then heal the wounds of the former by a *douceur*. “Very well, if that is the case, you may divide this between you,” he continued, giving the men a guinea, and repeating his injunction to them not to delay in seeing the old mariner and Gertrude home.

Thither they accordingly proceeded, after having expressed many acknowledgments to their noble assistant; though Gertrude’s tears spoke even more than all the expressions of gratitude of which the good old mariner disburdened his heart.

Leaving them, then, to proceed on their fateful errand, his lordship betook him home to achieve his toilette. Meantime, we will invite the reader at once to accompany us to the then seat of royalty in its brightest lustre, the abode of the Prince of Wales at Carlton House.

CHAPTER XIII.

"'Twas at the Royal feast—
——— the hero sate
On his imperial throne,
His valiant peers were placed around,
Their brows with roses and with myrtle bound."

DRYDEN.

WHAT a singular taste had the fourth George, as to what constituted magnificence!

Fond of show, fond of costliness even to the most extravagant extent, fond of the indulgence of even eastern luxury; yet this magnificent prince, (for so he was) delighted in low-roofed rooms, as the scene of his entertainments and residence. This circumstance is known to every one who remembers Carlton House in times past, or at a later period has examined Buckingham Palace, which was prepared especially to meet his tastes.

In that costly yet low-roofed banquetting room then, called the "golden-room," at Carlton

House, the burst of revel awoke; and the sallies of a Sheridan; the cool conceit and self-complacency (much more than the dry humour) of a Brummell; the vivid bursts of eloquent hilarity from the lips of a Fox; the eccentric remarks of a Hanger, (afterwards Lord Coleraine;) the endlessly overflowing anecdote and brilliancy of classical illustration of a Hare; the pithy “knowing” remarks of a Bullock, of Jockey-Club notoriety; the laugh-awaking drollery of a Jekyll,—all contributed to pour along the tide of joviality and convivial pleasure.

A great deal of that chit-chat went on in which his Royal Highness more particularly delighted, and in which Hanger, in his eccentric way, made the party laugh *aux éclats*. More especially were they amused with his well-known story of the dinner he had the honour to give to the Prince, at a period when his credit being exhausted, and his royal guest unexpected too, he “*borrowed*” a pair of soles in one quarter, and a leg of mutton in another; while Hare exclaimed, “*dapes inemptæ!*” After this characteristic narration, and a definition by Sheridan of “free and independent” electors, which he declared meant “free to pocket other people’s money, and to be independent of their promises,”—after much chit-chat of this kind, the conversation happened to turn on the singular cir-

cumstances relative to Hatfield, concerning which public interest was much excited at the moment, in consequence of the number of persons of distinction with whom he had been acquainted. In fact, there was not a person present who had not met him in society, while passing under the name of Capperhill as Lord Balderton's private secretary.

"An ingenious knave," said Hare; "and under better auspices would have shone in the council chamber, and exhibited a perfect model for our diplomatists, in the grand point of accomplished rascality!"

"Nay; don't use so plain a term," said Hanger; "the offence here is not in the thing, but the word! See the power of language. Like a prismatic glass, shifted different ways, it exhibits a different colour. Only substitute the word 'ingenuity' for that of 'rascality,' and the term 'diplomatist' for that of 'felon' or 'forger,' and you exhibit a marvellously clever and meritorious fellow instead of an expert rogue!"

"'Language' like 'conscience,'" observed Sheridan, "is too often but the covering that not only conceals deformity, but passes it off for a grace."

"I declare I don't know," said the warm-hearted Fox, "whether to be more interested as a politi-

cian (a 'political rogue,' if you please) at the address of Hatfield, or feel as a man for the devotion of the charming creature whom her ill-fortune has made his wife. The account the papers gave the other day of her flight with him to the coast, exhibited her devotion for him in a very interesting light."

"The story certainly has an interest," observed the Prince, "that I seldom remember surpassed, and exhibits the romance, whether tender or enterprising, of 'real life,' as nothing inferior to the creations of fiction. The poor girl was really worthy of a better and more auspicious alliance. I should like much to see her."

"That will not be difficult for your Royal Highness," said here a person, who having doffed his bear-skin waistcoat, shaggy surtout and trousers, and hob-nailed shoes, appeared now (under the phase of a civilized costume) something more like the rest of mankind in a humanized society. "I have myself been instrumental," he added, "in the course of this evening, in coming up not inopportunately, as it appeared, to her assistance."

"Romance on romance!" said the Prince, smiling, and with a look of no feigned interest. "Pray do us the favour, my lord, of relating the circumstances of this new chapter in the story of 'the Beauty of Buttermere,' of which the world

speaks so much at present—this modern Heloise of our British Meillérie, or Clarens !”

Accordingly, Lord Dromedford related the events of the earlier part of the evening, with which the reader is already acquainted. “And may I be permitted to add,” he continued, “my humble and earnest prayer in support of the poor girl’s petition for a reprieve for her husband ?”

There was a pause for the moment, not less exacted by the claim now made on the feelings of the party, than by the surprise at witnessing the fierce and pugnacious person who had advanced it, the advocate for the exercise of the softer attributes of mercy and humanity. The Prince’s feelings were with the noble petitioner, and, it is needless to say, with “the Beauty,” whose conduct had excited so much and deserved interest.

“Well,” he said, after a pause ; “I can safely say that if the minister will acquiesce, the petition is gained. But I fear, not all the interest that has manifested itself in the public in behalf of the young and lovely wife,—to say nothing of that which exists for the clever delinquent, her husband,—will avail in moving the marmorean stubbornness, the iron inflexibility, of Pitt.”

“I gave the poor girl to understand, your Royal Highness, that there would be no small difficulty in promoting her suit in that quarter ; and conse-

quently recommended her to address herself to perhaps the most interesting advocate she could have with your gracious self, in case my humble suit should fail."

"And who was that, pray?"

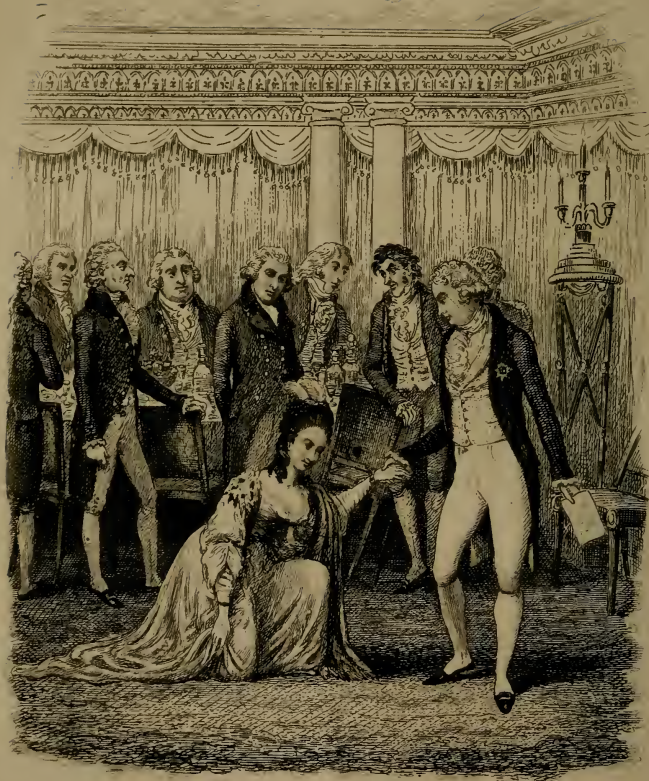
"The lovely Duchess of Devonshire;" for this indeed was the quarter to which Gertrude had resolved on addressing herself.

"Ay; want and woe, and helplessness and neglected merit, seldom fail to find a friend in her. A powerful advocate, indeed, is the beautiful Georgiana! I see not how I am to resist the eloquence of her Grace's eyes, should she come to plead for clemency, even before her tongue had confirmed their appeal. Well; Pitt must be persuaded to give way for once."

So spoke the Prince: the words being uttered with his usual dignity and grace of manner, and that true princely character, which was always ascendant, even, in the most familiar condescensions of his courtesy.

Scarcely had they escaped the lips of the royal speaker before the doors flew open and the lovely Duchess herself hurried into the room, with an anxious flush on her cheek, that spoke how warmly her heart now beat (as, indeed, it did ever) in the cause of humanity.

"Pardon, your Royal Highness, this unceremo-



Robert Cruikshank, fec.

"The Petition, said the Prince, is already granted."

nious and ill-beseeming intrusion; but the ear of a prince, as generous and benign as he is just, will, I know, ever willingly lend itself to the plea of clemency! If, then, it is for life I am come to pray your gracious protection, you will forgive my intrusion, and permit me to hope that the petition I present you may not fail in exciting your compassion, and inducing you to accede to its prayer."

"The petition," said the Prince, with a benign smile, as he rose and gracefully extended his hand to the lovely Duchess, "has already been made known to me—is already granted."

"Granted!—then Heaven itself is the advocate with your Royal Highness's bosom, and not the humble mortal who is before you!"

"I have a double gratification in performing an act of clemency, as a man no less than a prince. To know that an application for it is promoted by your Grace, is to know also that its concession is a worthy one."

"My thanks and those of the poor girl be returned you from the fulness of her heart and mine!" and she turned her head aside, to hide the tear that forced its way. A universal plaudit rose through the circle, as all its members now joined in drinking a health, after the convivial fashion of the time, to the warm-hearted and lovely Duchess, the

royal host being the first, not only to pledge, but propose it.

The anxiety that had led this exemplary and exalted female to the scene where she had played so interesting a part, was scarcely exceeded by that which she now experienced in conveying the happy intelligence of the success of her suit to Gertrude.

The circumstances of the application made to the Duchess will be explained forthwith in our ensuing chapter; meantime, while the plaudit was yet swelling forth that hailed her warmth of heart and generosity of disposition, she was fast hastening down the marble steps, to regain her carriage, and convey consolation to the anxious and expectant bosom of her humbler protégée.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ *Quelle femme jamais associa comme vous la tendresse et la vertu, et temperant l’une par l’autre les rendit toutes deux plus charmantes.*”—ROUSSEAU.

AND now to join Mike and Gertrude, in order to trace the progress of that eventful errand on which we left them.

On reaching the outer gate of the court affording an entrance to Devonshire House, an old man was engaged in warm parley with the porter, who, it should seem, had denied him admission, saying that her Grace could not be seen. On his alleging that it was on a matter where life itself was at stake that he requested admittance, he gained little further concession from the Cerberus at the gate, whose one surly reply was—

“ My orders are to let no one pass. You can leave what you have to say in the shape of a letter,

and it will come to her Grace's hand, I dare say, when she returns from the ball."

"I would only trespass on her time one moment. If she were to know that the matter I come upon is as serious as I have informed you, I am sure she would blame you (kind as they say she is) for not giving me admittance."

It was old Mike who spoke, an additional feature of interest being thrown over his wild and expressive countenance by the eagerness with which he combated the surly porter. It was a study for a painter to mark the wan yet animated traits and characteristic guise of the old mariner, as his form appeared in strong relief, beneath the light of a huge lamp that hung over the porter's lodge-door, where he stood.

"Hold your peace, old man! There is her Grace's carriage now at the door, and it will be passing immediately," growled the porter, putting old Mike aside with his arm, which was not dissimilar in sturdiness to one of the iron-bars of the gate which he drew back, as he proceeded to throw its huge folds open. To the porter's surprise, however, the carriage did not come forward from the portico, but was driven aside from the door, as if her Grace's intention of going out was adjourned for a short time; but, how this might be, we will at once proceed to inquire.

The Duchess, then, had been in the act of passing to her carriage from the steps of Devonshire House, in order to go to a ball, when a female ran up to her, and placing a paper in her hand, entreated her Grace to glance over its contents.

“And if,” added the female, in a tone of yet more anxious supplication,—“if it should fail to engage your kind attention, or plead sufficiently strongly to your interest, let this ‘chain’ speak for the unfortunate Gertrude of Buttermere, that she is, at length, compelled to shew it to your Grace, to recall the generous promise you made on giving it her, of exerting your interest in her behalf should she ever be constrained to seek it.”

The quick glance of the Duchess rested by turns on the paper, the chain which Gertrude held forward, and the suppliant herself. She at once recognised the chain (which she had formerly worn) and recalled the circumstance and occasion of her having given it to the lovely mountain-maiden on the day of the Derwentwater regatta. In an instant, the ball, the promise she had made to be present at it, the glitter, the pomp of that world of luxury and splendour, where she herself was awaited as its chief attraction and ornament, were all forgotten in the call of humanity.

Accordingly, after some kind words of recognition to Gertrude, and regret for the situation in

which she was placed, she hastened out of the carriage and returned to the drawing-room, in order to read the contents of the petition.

Gertrude was desired to follow her up stairs, and the Duchess having asked her if she had come to Devonshire House all alone, she was informed of the circumstance of the old mariner's detention at the gate.

Orders were instantly given that Mike should be permitted to pass. In fact, the Duchess remembered the scene on the lake in which Mike had been so prominent an actor. The porter had stopped his progress at the gate in consequence of the singularity of his appearance, wondering what such a "strange, outlandish-looking being" could possibly want up at the house, and mistrusting also the assurances he gave of the importance of his commission.

As for Gertrude, who had first of all advanced to the gate, he at once admitted her, on understanding she had business at the house, without any further question.

The Duchess having now read the petition, said to Gertrude, "You did rightly; I am glad you applied to me;" and her cheek was flushed with that warmth of sincerity which she felt in behalf of the petitioner, nor less with the earnestness of that benevolent purpose which prompted

her to use her utmost efforts in promoting its success. "I am happy," she repeated, "that you addressed yourself to me. To have applied to any member of the ministry would have been in vain—words wasted—time thrown away. I will speak to the Prince myself,—this instant I will seek out his presence. Live, my dear girl, in hope, and in the assurance that no effort of mine shall be left untried to assist you."

Another moment, and the Duchess was in her carriage, desiring to be driven as fast as possible to Carlton House. With what success she made her application has been already witnessed.

"Heaven is propitious to us!" she exclaimed, as she met Gertrude, on her return to the drawing-room; "your suit is gained; and now you shall be spared the anxiety you must necessarily feel until you are on your way to bear the warrant of pardon. This moment a carriage shall convey you, with an out-rider to expedite your way in the stoppages for changing horses; and your aged friend shall accompany you—this moment! By the time (and she here rang the bell and gave the requisite orders) the carriage is here, the gracious Prince who has granted my request will have commanded the document of reprieve to reach my hands."

The excess of joy that this intelligence occasioned in poor Gertrude's mind, so far overwhelmed her, that she was for some little time insensible,—as much so, as from a different and more bitter cause, we have witnessed her before. No attention that one fellow-creature can shew another was remitted, on the part of the best of her sex, towards her humbler sister,—whom she felt to be a *sister* by that common bond of suffering which links the highest and lowest together in the wide league of mortality.

Had words been wanting on the part of Gertrude to testify her gratitude, yet the effect her patroness's kindness had produced on her, amply testified how deeply it had been recognised. Acknowledgments, however, were not wanting on Gertrude's coming to herself, nor on the part of Mike previously to her recovery. But the Duchess declared she was more than sufficiently repaid, in the happiness she experienced, in having been able to succeed in her application ; and she now urged the instant departure of Gertrude, as the carriage was announced as ready.

This recommendation was speedily obeyed, and the fateful paper, which had just arrived, being now pressed to her heart, Gertrude, accompanied by Mike and the courier, or outrider, instantly proceeded on her eventful journey back to the

north. The Prince's wish to have seen the Beauty of Buttermere, and which he expressed to Lord Dromedford, was hence not gratified.

As the Duchess saw her depart she exclaimed, "Speed, now!—speed on your way!—the next time I meet Gertrude of Buttermere, when this crisis of bitterness is past, I hope to learn from her that she is rewarded with all the happiness she so much deserves."

The next time!—who can tell what storm of fate shall have fallen on that lovely brow when *next* the Duchess might see it?—when *next* she might possibly meet Gertrude? Already, its expression was so much depressed by grief, and the constant harassment of spirit, that she had viewed with surprise the traits that, so late, were as cheerful as they were lovely.

Thought had stamped its wasting impress on them; and apprehension looked fearfully and wildly forth from those eyes, whose vivacity had lately won their ray from the light of happiness and love!

The soft bloom had become yet more languid on the cheek; the tender hues of that saddened charm, if they touched the heart, and persuaded it to love no less than heretofore, asked, too, its regrets for the happy lustre that had erewhile illumined

features that shone to awaken feelings of joy no less than admiration.

The languid streak of the autumnal day, faint playing over those fair waters that washed her own native village banks, was not sadder than the chilled smile, the dimmed delight of those charms of hers, where all was drooping, and yet where all was still—how beautiful !

CHAPTER XV.

“ One, two ! (*the bell strikes.*)

The hour crawls on !—Once gone,
You cannot now recal your father’s peace,
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope,
Nor your dead mother !”

SHELLEY.

THE fateful crisis had now arrived, in looking for which the whole shires of Cumberland and Westmoreland had been standing on tiptoe.

All Carlisle, the scene where we now invite the reader, was in a buzz, discussing the singular history of Hatfield—the period being that of the assizes.

“ To think,” said one, “ that after so many more serious charges, he should at length be under sentence for the apparently trivial offence of counterfeiting the direction of a mere letter.”

“ Oh ! it is often the case,” replied another,

“that men, being emboldened by impunity in greater delinquencies, are so far thrown off their guard that they are at last entrapped into their ruin, through some minor hazard to which they had exposed themselves, by the too dangerous security they had acquired and felt.”

“True; but inattention does not appear to have been Hatfield’s error; though brave and enterprising, yet he was on his guard at the time he ‘defrauded the Post Office,’ (as the charge on which he has been condemned is termed.) Witness the plans he had previously laid for his escape from the neighbourhood of Keswick, where he put the fatal letter in, franked with Colonel Renmore’s name.”

Such indeed was the offence (the detection of which the reader remembers) for which he was doomed to suffer; for though justice had marshalled a dreadful array of delinquencies against him, yet the present offence having been cognizable in Cumberland in particular, as committed in that county, was made the subject of arraignment at the Carlisle assizes. It was supported by the evidence of Colonel Renmore as to the handwriting, and by the evidence also of Quandish. Though a crime comparatively slight, as placed by the side of those greater feats of counterfeit or forgery which had been committed by the same hand, yet what mat-

tered this to justice or law, since they had sufficient crimination on which to demand the sacrifice of his life, as an atonement general for his whole career of hitherto successful fraud. But to direct ourselves again to listen to the conversation of the good folks of Carlisle, as regards the subject of their universal interest, for a moment longer.

“To be sure, it is a sad pity that a man who could bring such a ‘mort’ o’ witnesses to speak in behalf of his superior conduct and behaviour in society, and the many acts of charity and benevolence he has been known to do—I say it is a sad pity that such a man should be in the unfortunate situation he is !”

“Indeed it is ! And to make the matter a subject of yet greater regret, he is about to suffer chiefly on the testimony of a witness who has benefited more than any other object of his benevolence !”

“What ! that villain Quandish ? By heavens ! I should like to see that dog hanged on a gallows as high as Mordecai’s ! His name is not Quandish, after all, it appears, but Simmonds.”

“Ay ; how the history of that scoundrel all came out during the trial, and the searching cross-examination with which he was ransacked by the young barrister who was counsel for Hatfield ! I never heard of a greater scoundrel than that Sim-

monds in my life. And he is the man that has passed for such a saint with the Buttermere and Keswick people !”

“ His black character was well exposed, and by his own forced avowal too, under the severe scrutiny of that young barrister. I never heard anything more complete.”

“ As much to the honour of the young counsel as to the shame and exposure of the vile “king’s evidence ;” for he was nothing better,—this Simmonds. His acrimony in pursuing Hatfield, as he has done so many months past, in spite of all the benevolence he had previously experienced from him, was, after all, merely to save himself in the Dublin forgery affair, for which so large a reward was offered.”

“ Nothing else in the world ! But let the base spy take heed ; he may himself be arraigned on that charge if he does not take care, unless in destroying Hatfield he has destroyed the testimony, too, that would condemn him. At present, Hatfield is much ‘ more sinned against than sinning ;’ as regards, I mean, the circumstance of his being about to suffer in consequence of his betrayal by this serpent, who has stung away his life, after having been cherished by him !”

So discoursed the “ good folks” of Carlisle, and such were the feelings with which they regarded

the subject of their chief and most painful interest, and the base witness brought to condemn him.

The reference made to the benevolence of Hatfield towards Quandish will be understood by the reader, to whom the circumstances of it have already been explained on the occasion of Hatfield's first interview with his pursuer, the pseudo-preacher, near the Dissenting Chapel, at Buttermere.

The young counsel who had so much called forth the admiration of the people, by his adroit conduct of the defence of Hatfield, was at once declared destined to rise to the highest honours in his profession. When we say that this prediction has been long ago proved true, we need scarcely particularize him by name. We may possibly yet introduce the reader to him for a short period ere we leave Carlisle. Amongst other charges that existed, though not brought forward against Hatfield,—since one was sufficient for the purpose of making him a sacrifice,—was that of the death of the two officers who had disappeared in their pursuit of him along the crag.

The secret of their fate the reader alone knows, with the exception of Mike and Gertrude; but justice would have been unable to demand vengeance for it, for lack of all evidence on the subject. In fact, when we consider the enormity of

the punishment to which Hatfield was consigned for so comparatively trivial an offence, it would seem that justice was eager to fasten her fang wherever she could, in order to recompense herself for the constant mockery with which she was met, in having victims wrested from her through quibbles of law or deficiency of evidence.

And, now, to leave the busy talking town and the confused crowd without, to enter the recesses of those melancholy walls, where, with sunken heart, and regret mingled indeed with reprobation, we seek the chief actor in the gloomy drama of which Carlisle was now the scene.

The coolness and self-possession which has characterized Hatfield's manner throughout our acquaintance with him, still distinguished him under the fearful circumstances of his present situation. Many who had met him in society, many who knew the conversational and social attractions he possessed, could not, from feelings of mingled curiosity and painful interest, refrain from visiting him, in the dreary abode where the waning hours of his ill-fated earthly pilgrimage were hastening to their close.

Golefield, ever feeling and charitable, did not meet him without a tear, expressive of the regret that arose on the reflection that one so calculated to adorn the walks of life, and render those around

him happy by his cheerfulness and amiability of manner, should stand thus branded under the strong hand of so bitter a destiny. It appeared a wonder, and a contradiction, the most melancholy of all which life and its distresses so widely exhibit, that one apparently possessed of so many social virtues should be thus stigmatized with the ignominious sentence due to the blackest guilt—the doom of death !

Hatfield was sensible of the kindness of the benign bard and philosopher towards him, and pressed in return the hand that did not disdain to clasp that of a criminal even such as himself, if by this testimony of kindness any consolation could be afforded the sufferer.

“ Why, really,” said Hatfield, calmly smiling, “ the terrors with which men invest death through the artificial associations of custom, no less needlessly indeed than considerably, augment our alarm. The solemn bell that shall knoll forth my passage to suffer the last penalty—what is it, but a mere sound, after all, if rightly considered ; and which wakes idly on the ear, were it not for the artificial associations connected with it ? Half the terrors a death such as mine possesses do but exist in the solemn forms in which Custom arrays it. The pomp of gloomy ceremonial is but vain and harmless to a philosophic mind, or a mind that

can abstract itself from the usances of earth and artificial life, and view things more essentially as regards their real nature. Death itself is a term whose terror exists more in the ideas Convention attaches to it than in itself! The 'ceasing to exist' (which it is) is as natural as the 'birth into existence;' and therefore ought not to create sensations more formidable! For why should it do so?—since we must die,—since decay, corruption, death (as it is termed), are inevitable. The thing *itself* then being unworthily an object of dread, much less so should the artificial terrors and solemn trappings in which Convention has dressed it, disquiet or alarm us."

"Socrates himself," replied Golefield, struck with the philosophic calm of the condemned man, "could not have delivered himself with greater fortitude or elevation of thought when under condemnation. Indeed, it is very true that we create for ourselves many of the sources of our alarm as regards the subject of death. That which appals and subdues a vulgar mind is deservedly disregarded, because better understood, by a more exalted spirit. A great mind, for example, will smile within itself at the hubbub and cry of importance raised about a thing in itself so insignificant as the extinction of breath in a pigmy earthworm such as individual man. Why! in the immense

system of the universe, where worlds throng on countless worlds, the extinction of one earth-ball or star-world from amid the myriads around, above, and below, what would it be? It would not be missed;—and yet how mighty a matter do we, the insects on this one earth-ball, this speck itself of a world, deem it, if the slight and pigmy tenure of our existence is broken and at an end !”

And the philosophic bard smiled solemnly, as he gazed in his mind’s eye on the dream of worlds and worlds that shone through the kaleidoscope of his fancy, while he, amidst all the vast glory of that dream, knew and saw himself the “pigmy speck” he had just described.

After a pause, Hatfield proceeded, his feelings being now called from himself to others, as he said—

“Yes ; I can, as far as my own feelings are concerned, meet my fate without much emotion. However unnecessarily severe I may consider the laws by which I suffer, I do not yet bear any ill-will to society by whose verdict I am condemned. Society I always courted, and I think won the esteem of——”

“Assuredly ! assuredly !”

“I cannot but blame myself for contravening its laws. Enough of that. Be it my misfortune, or

destiny, or infatuation, or, if you will, my guilt, and not merely the constraint of circumstance, that has placed me in the predicament in which I stand, I will not dwell on a topic that it were useless to discuss. No; it is not for myself I feel pain in being thus wrested from life; but for others—for her—for Gert——”

And his words were here checked by the emotion that overcame him, and which, for some time, he found it difficult to subdue. Some broken words escaped him—

“Say for me all that—say whatever can calm, or fortify, or heal her spirit,—say, too, all that the gratitude of a man and a husband can——”

Little did he or Golefield know the efforts this noble-spirited and constant wife was, and had been, making for his reprieve! No hope had been held out to him by the judge that sentenced him.

Golefield pressed the unhappy man’s hand, in token of encouragement and assurance that he would express everything that was asked of him. He was about to address some reply when the door of the cell was opened, and it was communicated by one of the authorities of the prison that, as the hour was now drawing near when its inmate would be summoned away never to return, the

curate of Lorton was waiting without, in order to offer any consolation that his sacred admonitions might impart.

“The curate of Lorton!—Fenton!” hastily exclaimed Hatfield, with yet increased anguish and emotion, as he started from the rugged seat which his cell enumerated in its grim furniture. “No, no!—not Mr. Fenton!—I *cannot*—I *must* not see *him*! Any other gentleman of his sacred brotherhood.”

“Nay, nay,” said Golefield, in a tone of gentle remonstrance, or rather persuasion; “why not see Mr. Fenton?—the mildest, the most considerate, the best of men and spiritual pastors.”

“I must not!—I dare not!”

“But why should you exhibit such disinclination to see so good a man?” asked Golefield, surprised at the agitation of mind which the thought of seeing Fenton in particular occasioned him. “Should anything dwell morbidly on the spirit, the curate of Lorton, of all other persons, might know the secret of relieving it, by the bland spiritual medicine he is so well able to impart.”

“So good a man, did you say?” replied Hatfield; “it is for this very reason I would not be selfish enough to shock him by shewing him how bad an one nature has given birth to in myself!”

“Let me persuade you——”

“I must not!” rejoined, hastily, the unhappy man, hesitating, and evidently under an intense struggle of feeling; “I dare not! I—I—fear to see him!”

“Why should you express yourself thus strongly? Why are you afraid to see him?”

“Afraid! Alas! and yet he may be afraid even more at seeing me,” said Hatfield, in a lowered tone, and with an expression of deep remorse.

“Have you injured him in any way? Impossible!”

“Injured him? If I have injured him, I should injure him yet more were I to see him.”

Golefield was silent in surprise and sorrowful conjecture, as to the purport of Hatfield’s words; while he himself was silent too, and wrapped in deep no less than painful consideration, as to some resolve he knew not whether to follow or reject. At length, he suddenly exclaimed, as if having raised his spirit to an effort that required all its energies to sustain—

“Well; I will see him! Though I would not that anguish—that harm—should assail him in consequence of all that may pass between us; yet I have now a bitter curiosity—a fatal desire to make the disclosure—to own . . . no more! no more!

Give him admittance, dear Sir,—request him to join me.”

And here he took an affectionate leave of the benign person, of whose kindness he had been more particularly sensible than of any that had been manifested by any other person, among all those who had expressed their deep regret at his situation.

The gentle-hearted bard was too much overpowered to reply to the expressions of grateful acknowledgment uttered by the condemned man, and so took his departure, with full heart and sincere regret, in order to leave him alone with the Curate of Lorton, who was now awaited by him in his cell.

He sat with his head sunk down between his clasped hands, under the influence of some violent struggle of feeling. So completely was his spirit wrapped up in it, that he did not perceive that Fenton had entered the cell and stood beside him. He started up and fixed a wild and intent gaze on the countenance of the good and reverend man.

Fenton was the first to speak, and addressed him with his usual blandness; but he did not, or could not, answer. At last, the conflict of feeling that was struggling in his bosom could no longer repress itself, as it found vent in an agony of tears, while the exclamation broke from his lips—

“O God! to think we should meet again after long, long bitter years of severance—and meet thus!”

Fenton, never having been acquainted (to his knowledge, at least) with the unhappy man previously to the occasion of the luckless marriage at Lorton, was surprised at hearing these words, and mildly replied, that he should indeed have been happy could their meeting have been marked by less melancholy circumstances. At the same time, he could not call to mind that he had ever seen the person he addressed, at any such previous distance of time as he seemed to imply. The Curate then begged the prisoner to be comforted and composed.

“Yet I cannot wonder,” he added, as his humane feelings dictated, “at this access of passion in a naturally generous and sensitive spirit, which I trust you possess, from many estimable traits I have heard of your disposition, however misfortune or necessity may have banefully exercised its influence in thwarting your better natural inclinations. This burst of grief will ease your surcharged spirit. Let it have its way—it is acceptable in the sight of Mercy!”

The good man paused, as the prisoner, endeavouring to surmount his anguish, replied, while he

condemned himself, in much bitterness of remorse, apparently—

“No; you are too forbearing and kind, thus to impute anything naturally good to me! I at an early age forfeited the esteem of the best of parents, and left them, in my heartlessness, to anguish and remorse. Had you ever—a son? Did he ever by his heartless conduct occasion the death of the tenderest of mothers? and leave his father to inconsolable hours of grief, which hard circumstances had rendered galling enough before? Had you ever, I ask, a son?”

Fenton gazed with breathless and painful interest on the face before him, lost in surprise as to the means by which the unhappy man could know so much of his family distresses.

“I had,” he said, in a tone in which fear and regret were mingled: “I had, indeed, a son!”

“You had? Would you own him as such in the hour of shame, of death, should he fling himself on your bosom and pray to you for forgiveness, as—as—I do now?”

And saying this, Hatfield (whose real name now, at length, painfully discloses itself) fell in all the passion of mingled grief and affection upon the bosom of Fenton, who stood statue-like, with his hand raised to his venerable brow, sprent with

grey thin hairs, while he turned aside his head, in vain endeavouring to check the tears that chased each other down his withered cheek.

After a lengthened pause, in which both the sire and son were maintaining a bitter struggle of feeling, Fenton was the first to break the silence, as he raised up his ill-fated son, who now stood with downcast brow before him.

“Is it thus, then, I have found you!” and he gazed on his countenance with remorse more than reproach. “Your mother’s look speaks to me,—pleads to me for you, in your brow!—that mother whom you——”

“Murdered!—forgive me!—oh! if you can, forgive me! But how can you, when I cannot forgive myself? Oh! bitter as just accusation! Did I not ruin her peace of mind, her health, her life, by my heartless abandonment of your roof? The thought is worse than a thousand deaths as ignominious as that I am doomed to suffer! No; you cannot forgive so base a son! especially when he comes before you denounced by the laws of his country, as he was, before, by those of Heaven!”

“The meeting is indeed bitter,” said the old man, and his voice failed.

“I had wished to have been spared it; but I was forced to encounter it. I had wished to have

suffered you to remain in the comparatively happy belief that I had long ago been swept (as soon I shall be, and with shame!) from existence. Yes; I had wished to have spared you this additional pang—this additional proof that I was born as your curse! From my cradle, it seems, I was doomed to be a source of pain to you, and to her who mourned for me till she sunk in death. Snatched from you while yet an infant, I was but restored to you and her to occasion you an augmented cause of grief at a more advanced age. Heavens! I have been inclined at times to think with one who remembers my early tale,”—and he referred to old Mike as he spoke this :—“that I have been the slave and toy of some dark decree of fate,—at times, I say, I have thought thus, and blamed myself less; but, then, when I recurred to the bitter circumstance of my mother’s death, which I learned some time after my abandonment of home,—I again reproached myself in all the bitterness of grief and compunction. Yes; this bitter disclosure of myself I had wished to spare you—and the pain it carries with it! Witness, Heaven! how often has my heart yearned inwardly towards you, when I knew you were in the neighbourhood where I had been staying!—how my footsteps bent (whether I would or no) towards your dwelling, and have led me past

your gate, longing, but not daring to intrude my inauspicious presence. I was withheld from doing so,—I knew the brand of legal denunciation was upon me,—I thought, ‘I will spare my father this trial at least!’ but Heaven has willed that all my bitter history should be laid before you. Witness, Heaven! what tears have I shed over my mother’s memory, in secret, silent hours of anguish and torturing self-reproach! And when you perhaps were recalling the name of your luckless son, whom you deemed dead, with blame, yet compunction, he was offering up prayers for your peace, and for forgiveness from his mother’s spirit and offended Heaven.” After a pause he continued—

“What would I have given to have entered your door and thrown myself at your feet! My hand has been on the latch—has trembled, and fallen from it. But on the one occasion when at length that latch was raised, how all the conflict of spirit I have described, battled within me more painfully than ever! But yet I dared not make the disclosure. As I sate opposite you, and as you regarded me fixedly, I thought, in spite of the change time has made in these features, you would have recognised me! I turned my brow away,—but oh! how my heart beat under the struggle of which it was conscious—how it beat—when first I

saw you enter the room ! I longed to raise my voice to cry out, with the prodigal son, ‘ Father, forgive me ! though I am no longer worthy to be called your son ! ’ How did I long to hasten up to you, to fling myself at your feet, and make myself known to you ! ”

“ And you should have been received as the hapless prodigal of the blessed book was by *his* father ! Yes ; though a criminal,—though a witness of disgrace and source of woe to me,—I will forget it all in the thought you are yet—” his voice failed as he added, “ *her* son ! ”

He was able to articulate no more ; words were no longer available to express the anguish—yet the pleading of affection—that agitated his spirit.

Willingly would we draw a veil over the suffering of the father, even as the painter of old veiled the brow of Agamemnon over his daughter’s sacrifice ! Bitter was the account between the sire and the son !—bitter the effort of mutual consolation ; for the parent was now, perhaps, in more need of it than the son !

The agonizing disclosure, the thought of which we have witnessed throughout our pages as having wrought such anguish to the son, had now been made. But to heal the wound it inflicted on the bosom of Fenton . . . there was but one dread

remedy that could ever assuage such an infliction !

But hark ! they come !—the mournful ministers of death's last scene,—their footsteps sound in hollow echoes along the passage that leads to the cell. Chill fell they on the heart of him who was to suffer, but not more chill than on the heart of the convulsed and sinking parent. Not only on his own account, but much—oh ! much more on that of his venerable sire, did the condemned one now call up all his native fortitude of soul, strengthened yet more by the hallowed energies of filial affection.

“ Dear father !” he said, as the old man rose together with himself, to be in readiness to meet the melancholy train that was soon to enter his cell,—“ dear father, you must not attend me !—I entreat you, forbear such a trial ! Your presence at this awful moment unnerves me ! I can meet death firmly as far as I am myself concerned, but the suffering I am sensible of for you, I confess, is more than I can bear without being shaken—I entreat you, stay away !”

“ Impossible ! my presence is required—is indispensable ! This bitter secret that has been imparted to me,—that has discovered in you a son to me,—has not been made known yet to the world.

There is no one of my clerical brethren on the spot to perform the last sad duties on this occasion, and the public requires therefore the presence of the only one at hand, which is myself! Even were it permitted me to withdraw from this bitter trial, I feel I could not! No, my son! I will accompany you to the——”

“Scaffold!—ay, such is my dark destiny—the judgment (I must deem it) that has fallen on my head, for the death of that dear parent——”

But if concern and anguish wrung the heart of the son at the thought of the parent he had lost, they were scarcely less keenly awakened for the parent also that he now pressed to his heart, in the farewell they snatched ere “the satellites of doom” should arrive. A more deadly paleness had bespread that venerable brow and furrowed cheek. Nature flagged, and life indeed seemed nearly extinct within him, from the effect of the violent internal struggle that had convulsed him beyond the power of rallying or restoration. The arm of his ill-fated son supported his tottering frame, as the old man’s lips moved as though in the attempt to speak, while the power of utterance was denied.

At this moment the cell door opened; the melancholy train presented itself; and the warning

summons of the bell proclaimed to the unhappy partners (we may indeed call them) in suffering, whither it was that they were now called away.

Brief as precipitate was the way they went—for it was to death! but vast and enduring was the track that stretched beyond it—it was the bourne of Eternity!

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Ha ! ’tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold ;
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death !

* * * * *

Woe to the wrong’d and the avenger ! Woe
To the destroyer—woe to the destroy’d !
Woe both to those that suffer and inflict !”

SHELLEY.

THERE was a din in the wide square of Carlisle—the din of manifold voices,—the buz of the restless crowd that now awaited the appearance of the fatal procession, and gazed anxiously towards the scaffold. Some, indeed, of that gazing throng strained it on the tiptoe of mere idle curiosity ; but the greater number looked on with breathless and painful interest. Few, very few, were able to entertain those sentiments of solemn satisfaction inspired by the feeling that the spirit of injured Justice was being appeased ; since the penalty on the present

occasion was considered so disproportionate in its severity to the nature of the peculiar offence for which vengeance was sought.

Remarks of this nature were freely made, and by various persons; amongst others, by a young barrister, who was one of the crowd, and who has been already specified as having won so much applause by his clever management of the defence for the unhappy victim.

“Justice, indeed! justice!” he reiterated, with his characteristic, and, in the present instance, appropriate tone of sarcasm, (the reader will, we doubt not, recognise the speaker)—“May I live to see the day when such justice as this may be loathed, as it deserves to be!—when the foul libel uttered now on its real name may be for ever silenced in shame! Justice, forsooth! did ever *injustice* so foully disfigure any legal code?”

“Come, come; these words are too bitter, my worthy young orator!” said a sleek-faced, formal, and somewhat corpulent person, in a bushy brown wig, whose lip quivered with suppressed rage, while his countenance wore an aspect of assumed demureness. “Here, in a breath almost, you condemn those two great authorities of the empire—the Bank and the Government;—for the latter has only conciliated the former in making forgery ‘capital!’ Young man! young man! the law must

be venerated! One of your years is by no means competent to speak of the expediency of enactments that have been sanctioned by wiser heads than your own."

"Wiser heads!" interrupted the young barrister, impatiently, as he cast a hasty glance on the demure supporter of "legal murder," and as quickly turned away from him in disgust. He fancied, by-the-bye, that he had seen a countenance that somewhat resembled that of his opponent, though he could not recall the precise occasion on which he had witnessed it.

"Ay; wiser heads than yours, young man, have deliberated on the justice of the sentence now about to be put in execution; and let me suggest, you have no right to arraign the award of the law!"

"Such is the strain of servile, paltry cant, and narrow, hoodwinked prejudice; such is the strain of a grovelling spirit, and one confederated in the base league of upholding abuses!" replied the young barrister, with that characteristic acrimony which afterwards rendered him so formidable an antagonist in argument, both forensic and parliamentary. "May I live, however, to see the day—" he proceeded, with the same characteristic fervour, and that eloquence of wrong into which the "indignant spirit warmed him," as Juvenal says of his own

verse,—“ may I live to see the day when this act about to be perpetrated may be denounced as a ‘ legal murder ! ’ ”

“ Young man ! young man !——”

“ I will speak ! ” he continued, like Hotspur. “ Yes ; when those who are the upholders, the instigators, of so flagrant a dispensation shall be pulled down from their high estate, and held up to merited scorn and execration ! ”

The demure upholder of old abuses and legal enormities shrunk back confounded before the withering look of scorn, and the indignant tide of eloquence, with which he was encountered. The spirit of “ cant,” however assured a countenance it may for a time bear, is seldom able to hold itself up long before the true and fervent language of the heart, exercised for its discomfiture. The ascendancy of Truth makes itself at last felt, and wrings a conviction from its shrinking antagonist, of his own littleness and conscious shame.

The spark of feeling that shone forth in the young orator and future statesman was not without kindling a similar warmth in the breast of one who stood near ; but his milder tone and gentler disposition expressed itself in a different way, as he observed to the other—

“ Indeed, I feel with you, that the present occa-

sion exhibits a melancholy perversion of that which the decrees of Mercy and Wisdom (not human laws) pronounce to be Justice."

This person was Golefield, who in his passage from the cell had found his way so much impeded by the people in front of the prison, that he was obliged to remain in the crowd, although he would gladly have withdrawn and avoided witnessing the melancholy spectacle now briefly to be presented. He spoke as a philosopher,—the person he addressed spoke as a politician. They each viewed the same subject with equal condemnation; the one, with the regret rather of a sage; the other, with more of the abhorrence of an ardent political combatant.

The philosopher proceeded (for the brief period now allowed him) in his peculiar vein—

"And melancholy, too, is it to see, on looking round ('theorising,' as the Greeks say) over this wide arena, this sea of human heads,—heart-rending is it to see the callous indifference of many, and the vain curiosity of some, to witness the spectacle, and not derive benefit from the lesson. Look at those simple rustic throngs; look at those mothers there, leaving their domestic duties, and hurrying with their infants in their arms, when they had better have stayed at home. Why do they come? merely to gratify idle curiosity?"

The lawyer curled up his lip, and said hastily—

“ Ay, ay ! true, true ! but I view the matter in a different light, and with more exasperated feelings than you do, good Mr. Golefield. And—”

But here the colloquy was interrupted by the entry of the fatal procession on the platform of death, whither now the attention of the pallid and anxious crowd was directed.

Yes ; that grim stage now presented the actors in the mournful drama, where “ terror and pity ” indeed swayed the audience, and death was the catastrophe. The pomp of Doom was there ! What man in those closely packed numbers heard not the beating of his own heart, in the dead silence that reigned around ? All eyes are turned to the chief actor in that fearful drama,—by whose side is one whom all hearts recognise with feelings of mingled awe and affection—the curate of Lorton.

Wherefore is it that the current of interest, of emotion, is for an interval suddenly diverted from its primary course ? On whose form upon that grim platform do the eyes of the multitude now turn them for awhile from the principal actor on it ? A murmur of inquiry confusedly arises through that crowd, swelling by degrees louder and louder, as those lately hushed beings found again the tongue whose use had been denied them, all benumbed as it was in the chill of awe.

The remark went rapidly from one to the other—

“ See ! the good Mr. Fenton is ill ! What illness is it that has seized the good curate ? ”—and anon the exclamation of surprise arises—“ Oh ! see, he falls back ! ”

“ Yes ; and the prisoner has caught him in his arms,” was the rejoinder, “ and clasps him to his heart ! ”

“ What can this mean ? ” was the universal question arising from these various remarks.

The priest had come forward, according to the duty of his office, to administer the last dread consolation to the victim ; but his voice had faltered as he endeavoured to give utterance to the sacred words ; nor less had his step, too, wavered as he faced, side by side with that victim on the platform, the assembled people. He faced them, indeed, but all was indistinctness to his gaze, which grew more and more dim, while that maze of forms swam before him as so many shadowy “ phatasmata ” that rise and fade past. The spirit was dying within him. The prisoner grasped his hand and spoke to him words of affection and support. It was in vain ; the effort to rally the sinking spirit was ineffectual :—a moment, and another—and Fenton, the good Fenton, was dead.

The anxiety, the bitter interest, the affectionate and earnest attention, evinced by the prisoner towards the good old man affected as well as

amazed all. The usual order of circumstances on occasions such as the present was here reversed. They witnessed in the prisoner the person who himself administered, rather than received, aid and spiritual succour. There arose a universal burst of compassionate admiration and surprise through the wide throng. Rude were their words indeed, but they spoke from the heart.

“It is a shame,” they cried, “he should die !”

“What is the meaning,” asked others, “of this ?” in addition to their cry of “Save, save him !—this conduct makes him worthy to be saved !”

They were mute, as the prisoner, while he still held the form of his dead parent in his arms, addressed a word in answer to their inquiries, and in acknowledgment of their feeling and kind wishes towards him.

“No, my friends, let me die !—let me die !” he said ; “let me die with the best of parents, and one whom (with the bitterest remorse) I am conscious of having injured ! Were I not about to meet death at the hands of the law, I should merit it for my conduct towards him. I should grieve to live after I had lost him ! I had wished to have saved his name from the blot that must sully it in being known as connected with mine, (or with that rather under which I was disguised,) but the bitter cir-

cumstance that you have just witnessed has rendered this unavoidable. You are amazed, my friends and fellow-countrymen. But a culprit stands before you, condemned not more by the award of the law of the land, than by his own conscience, for the wrong committed towards so beloved, so cherished a man, so indulgent a parent. What is my contrition (deep and bitter as it is,) now available?"

"His affection, his contrition, repairs his fault!" cried out many of the crowd. "Let us hear what he did," cried others—"what was the wrong he speaks of?"

The prisoner proceeded briefly to satisfy the demands of their curiosity, by stating how his mother's life had been probably shortened by her grief, at his early abandonment of the home which was so much embittered by this circumstance. Ill indeed had her indulgence been repaid by her only offspring; and this avowal for a moment suspended the feelings of the crowd in his favour; but their transient condemnation of him was obliterated by the great argument to their feelings that existed in his generous and touching condemnation of himself. Coupled with this also was the remorseful and affectionate conduct he had manifested towards the parent, whose form, cold in death, he yet clasped to his heart, and which created such a tide

of compassionate zeal in his behalf that the populace was carried away by it.

And now the cry of "Save him!" had reached a pitch that was uncontrollable. A rush was about to be made towards the platform in order to effect his rescue, for the cry of "Save him" was but one and the same with "Rescue him."

All that mighty crowd rose as with one movement, animated, too, as it was by one impulse;—but it had scarcely sprang forward to pursue its object, than the fatal knell had sounded the hour which was the first to the victim of that Eternity which now spread before him.

The stern decree of justice was unalterable, unavoidable. The object of their sympathy was in an instant past all need, as he was beyond all reach, of their aid.

The torrent of the crowd which had rushed forward, now fell back, suddenly checked; but it is probable that, having been once set afloat thus vehemently, nothing less would have satisfied its discontent at being thus frustrated in its original object, than by venting its wrath in demolishing the scaffolding, and punishing the luckless ministrants of justice and awarders of a doom that had disgusted them. But their attention was suddenly diverted in another direction; and every brow was turned away from the scene of its late painful survey to

the opposite side of the square. A female form there made itself apparent, hurrying, as a *Mœnad* of old, with streaming hair and wildness in her looks; while a female voice, too, shrieked aloud, in a voice of anguish, accents that a moment sooner would have awakened gladness in all hearts,—but now saddened them as much in regret and disappointment:—those accents syllabled “*REPRIEVE!*”

The accents escaped indeed her lips; but her eyes, as they turned to the spot whither she hurried, told her they were uttered—too late! She gazed fixedly for one brief instant on the bitter spectacle—it was to her, hopelessness! And after uttering one or two incoherent cries, she sank, as though life were in herself, too, extinct, at the foot of the scaffold, which her unhappy destiny, and that of its victim no less, had forbidden her to reach earlier with the scroll of rescue!

The crowd thronged eagerly round her;—all recognised her—all felt for her, and with her! All were acquainted with the singular no less than unhappy circumstances in which she had been involved, as connected with him she had sought to save. The tale of her flight with him had been in the mouths of all, and had elicited the sensations, warm, tender, and approving, that were due to a devotion such as hers. But when it was understood what had been the last unfortunate effort of

that devotion,—as the ill-fated document was picked up where it had fallen from her hand when she sank,—those sensations were felt yet more tenderly, no less than bitterly.

There was not a tongue that did not express its commiseration,—there was not a heart that did not glow over the recital of all she had dared and suffered in behalf of him who was one with herself; and the more it felt sensible of the beauty no less than exaltedness of her conduct, the more was the heart softened to feel her present suffering its own.

The cause of Gertrude,—her anguish, her chill of disappointment,—was that of every one around.

“Unhappy girl!” said one, who had raised her head gently up from the ground, and bent over her as he supported her; “hard, hard is the lot she has endured, and still endures!” It was Golefield. Little did he expect such a remark as the following:

“If she suffers, she has herself to thank! She must take the consequences!”

“Is it possible there is one in this crowd, calling himself a man and a Christian, who does not feel with her?” exclaimed the benign bard, as he looked up with indignation mingled with grief, to see who it could be that seemed so little to sympathise in the general feeling in behalf of Gertrude.

Nor was he the only one that felt indignation:

the young "counsellor" (as those who knew him in the crowd termed him) also turned round, and exclaimed, as he looked at him with scorn—

"Oh! I am not surprised at such a sentiment from you! You are the gentleman, I think, that expressed such *conscientious* approbation of the 'legal butchery' we have just witnessed! Indeed, you are admirably consistent in evincing your present superiority to all feelings of compassion!"

In fact, it was the apostle of abuse, and prejudice, and hypocrisy, who now met the merited sneer of the young barrister, and on whom he had inflicted the castigation of his sarcasm some little time before, and ere the melancholy tragedy of the day had been enacted. Golefield, in more gentle strain, continued his rebuke—

"Herself to thank, say you? I envy not such a sentiment from one calling himself a man! At the same time," he added, ironically, "I am not surprised at a conscientiousness so admirable—to judge by your late approbation of all we have witnessed this day! A little charity, however, would have been better bestowed in the present instance. There is no one can contemplate the noble affection of this exemplary and unhappy girl without admiring her fortitude and love, and lamenting they should have met with so ill a reward!"

But here his words were interrupted by an old

man, for whom the crowd had made way, and who now, having his attention called to the object of Golefield's rebuke, exclaimed to the crowd, as he searched him with a look at once scornful and scrutinizing—

“What! know you not, my friends, who the person is that shews himself so worthy a member of a community of men and Christians? Lay hands on him, my friends,” he continued, addressing himself to the angry and indignant populace, “and examine him a little; and it is strange to me if you do not find under that demure exterior the disguised person of one of the blackest of the human race,—the man who ‘swore away’ the life of him who has just suffered on yonder scaffold,—the author of all the joint miseries you now deplore, of that victim and yonder unhappy girl! Ah, what! — he would slink away! Lay hands on him, my friends, if only to ascertain if the words of old Mike be right or no!”

It was indeed the old mariner himself that spoke. He had been distanced by Gertrude on their entry into the melancholy arena, where the crowd thronged before the fatal platform. He had followed her steps as she sprang forward and hastened onwards with the document of reprieve; but the crowd having closed in upon the way she had taken, the old man's progress was impeded.

On his having now come up to the spot where Golefield supported her, he, after a very trifling scrutiny, detected the person of Quandish, or Simmonds,—to use his real name,—under the disguise he wore.

The hint afforded by the old mariner to the populace was not lost on them, as may readily be imagined. They seized him, as he was trying to make good his escape. Under their stringent scrutiny, the instruments of disguise—the bushy wig, the broad-brimmed hat, the upper garments—were all torn away, and exhibited the veritable features of the Judas who had betrayed and brought to the scaffold his former benefactor.

“ I thought I remembered having seen that interesting countenance before !” exclaimed sarcastically the young barrister, with a scornful smile. “ I may, however, be excused for not acknowledging a former acquaintance when he appeared in a shape so little cognizable. My friends, now we have found him, let us make much of him !” he continued, turning to the populace, with his characteristic sarcasm ; “ and, by all means, let him be well lodged and taken care of—you know where,—the cage makes a very convenient place to put up at in certain cases, and with the constables for lackeys !”

In fact, the young barrister very properly spoke

with the view to at once having Quandish arrested, in order that he should be taken before a magistrate, and committed for those heavy charges to which, as regards his former commerce with his late victim, he was yet amenable.

But the people, or mob, if you please, were not inclined to proceed on so leisurely a course; but would be content alone with taking the law into their own hands. Their exasperation, indeed, knew no bounds, when they discovered that in the person before them they saw the chief instrument of the doom of that victim in whose behalf their sympathies had lately been so strongly excited. To wreak their vengeance, then, on his betrayer was but a sort of atonement due to him, as they considered, besides being a vent for that torrent of feeling in his behalf which had been as yet checked in its course.

“What! is he the man that made such an exposure of his own villany in the court?” cried one.

“Away with him,” cried another, “to the next tarn!” while a rush was made from the town to execute some deed of vengeance on the wretched Judas.

“Treat him gently,—treat him gently, my friends!” uttered a sarcastic voice: it was that of the young barrister, who, after having taken leave

of Golefield, and expressed his hope of Gertrude's recovery, followed the crowd to the outskirts of the town. He left Carlisle that day, to pursue his way on the circuit and to renown. So here we bid him farewell.

And now to return to Quandish. Well would it have been for him had he been content with having brought down doom on his late enemy by his testimony against him, nor had further sought to glut his savage and rancorous nature by lurking before the scaffold, to witness the execution of that doom! However, (as the young barrister had a short time since remarked,) this trait in his character was but consistent with all its other malignant attributes. Bitterly did he suffer for this rash gratification of a malice against his late adversary, and which he carried even beyond the grave—the grave to which he himself had brought him.

Amidst the taunts and execrations of the mob, he was hurried away from the square, afraid on his own part to call in the interposition of the police, since it might be the means of consigning him to the justice from which he had such strong reasons for shrinking. To leave him, then, to their tender mercies, and merely to state that they did not desist from assailing him until they left him for dead by a lonely tarn-side amongst the mountains,—we shall return to the spot where Golefield was now,

together with Mike, offering what assistance they might to Gertrude.

“Let us take her to her mother’s as speedily as possible,” said the former.

“Ay, ay,” replied Mike; “if the dame had ever harboured an unkindly sentiment towards the dear thing, she will forget it now, one should think, to see her thus laid low and suffering. The poor, beautiful, kind-hearted creature!” and the old man turned his head aside and dashed away a tear. “I have seen many a bitter sight in my lifetime, but never one that touched my heart so much as this.”

And so saying, the old mariner assisted in raising her into a litter which had been brought in order to convey her softly to some abode in the town, where she could be properly attended to until it was deemed expedient to remove her to her home.

“Bear her gently, my friends,” said Golefield, as he followed the litter. “I would her mother were here; I shall write to apprise her of the condition in which her lovely child is. She will, I question not, blame herself for ever having regarded her daughter with sentiments of dissatisfaction; for she will now be made aware of the character of the hateful person (this Quandish) who succeeded so much in blinding her judgment; nor will she

wonder that poor Gertrude, who had more discernment as to his character than herself, regarded him with the disgust he alone merited. Unhappy girl! hers has been a bitter doom. Bear her gently, my friends, this way. How her beauty is wronged by this outrage—how dimmed!”

So saying, Golefield, adding his regrets to those of the good old mariner, followed the train that conducted to its spot of destination—and accompanied with their sympathies—the bowed lily—the scattered gem—the blighted “Beauty” of Buttermere.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play ;
For some must watch while some must weep :
So runs the world away.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“To Westmarlande,
Which is myne herytage,
I will you brynge, and with a rynge,
By way of maryage,
I will you take and ladye make.”

OLD BALLAD OF THE “NOT BROWNE MAYD”—DODSLEY.

THE estimable and distinguished lady who had interested herself so much in behalf of our lovely as ill-fated heroine, awaited with no small degree of anxiety the return of the courier who had been dispatched, together with Gertrude ; on her hurried progress to the north, with the reprieve.

When the Duchess heard, on the arrival of her messenger at Devonshire House, that, hurried as that progress had been, yet Death had been

beforehand with it on the way, she was deeply and painfully affected.

“Poor girl ! it would be a melancholy pleasure to me to see her once again, and express my sincere condolence with her, that all my efforts in behalf of her unhappy husband should have been destined by Heaven to be unavailing.”

So spoke this estimable lady, who, though amongst the high-born dames and princesses of earth, forgot the pride of the palace, to shed a tear—a feeling tear—for the sufferings of a humble sister ; and whose truest nobility was the high-mindedness that glows in the generous self-approval that is conscious of doing good, and assuaging the pangs of suffering humanity.

The wish she had expressed, of once again seeing the luckless maiden of Buttermere, was no vain or fleeting “breath ;” and she looked forward at no very distant day to shaping her course once again to the mountain-region where this lovely flower drooped beneath the storm of her ill destinies—a storm, indeed, not less fierce than any that gathered over her native crags of Melbreak, Skiddaw, or Helvellyn.

Nor was the beautiful and generous Duchess the only one that felt for the bitter circumstances of which the storm-bowed flower of Buttermere was the victim. When her next visit was

made to Carlton House, its royal tenant did not fail to express his unfeigned regret at the too tardy arrival of that mandate of mercy which he had granted.

The rugged and fierce disposition of Lord Dromedford relented no less in the universal sympathy that was felt by all ranks and classes of society; and when the subject was mentioned at the princely table, even Jekyll forgot his jokes; Sheridan, his sallies; Fox, his party enthusiasm; Hare, his animated discussions of the last night's card-playing; Bullock, his knowing expositions of the mysteries and tricks of the turf, and the balances of his betting-book;—yes, all forgot respectively their wit or their worldliness as the simple language of the heart prevailed, in regretting the unfortunate circumstances of the poor girl's story, and the too tardy reprieve.

But to quit Devonshire and Carlton Houses, and repair to dwellings where we are called to greet acquaintances it is now time we should renew.

It was in a house, then, situate in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square, that a renowned physician called to visit a young lady, who had been his patient through the greater part of the season. Finding the fair invalid, to his satisfaction, much better, and having directed a continuance of the regimen already prescribed, he was about to take

his leave, when her father, who had just entered the drawing-room, inquired, ere the celebrated Galen retreated down stairs—

“ And you don’t think it will hurt her to go out, then, to Lady Balderton’s this evening ?”

“ Not at all ; if she feels an inclination.”

“ And as to diet ; I presume she may have one glass of wine ?”

“ Certainly ! certainly !”

“ And you will allow, perhaps, a little change in her diet ?—she is getting rather tired of fricasseed chicken and beef-tea every day.”

“ By all means !” said this “ comforting” and accommodating disciple of Hippocrates ; “ she can have any little thing she likes. Her liking it, whatever it may be, will be no small proof to me that it agrees with her !”

“ I suppose she may not venture on ice, or one half-glass of champagne ?”

“ By all means ! by all means ! If it is agreeable to her, it cannot be prejudicial.”

“ The opera would be too fatiguing for her to encounter, would it not, just yet ?”

“ Not at all ; if she likes it, and it amuses her. If it amuses her mind, it will do her system good, and improve also her bodily health, as a consequence ; the mind and the corporeal qualities act reciprocally on each other. Hitherto we have

been restoring health and tone of spirits by invigorating the frame; and who can say that our 'system' has not been beneficial? By all means, then, our fair patient can go out to Lady Balder-ton's, if she pleases,—yes, and not deny herself the opera, ice, champagne—whatever she feels an inclination for!"

So saying, the physician took his leave; and we think it will be almost needless for us to observe, since the reader will have recognised him by his characteristic "spirit of accommodation," that it was no other than our worthy friend, Doctor Esdaile.

We remember the circumstance of his having been summoned from his former place of abode, in the region of his favourite char-floods, to assist, by his valuable advice, a noble invalid in London. So agreeable to this noble patient was the mode of treatment adopted by Doctor Esdaile, that, doubtless out of sheer gratitude, he spread the praises of his medical adviser, and recommended him throughout the wide circle of his distinguished and influential acquaintance. The result was, that our good friend the Doctor and his "system" became quite the rage. Invalids found they could not have any treatment so agreeable as that of this "accommodating" no less than "philosophic" physician.

The principle of adapting his treatment as much to the tastes of his patients as circumstances would permit, was at once as pleasant a plan for the patient as it was a prudent "system" for the physician. His practice increased immensely; so that it determined him on fixing his abode in town,—since wealth was being heaped up every day, and honour was in expectancy. The *Code de santé* whose golden maxims we have afforded the reader in an earlier portion of our story, had become so fashionable as a "manual of health," that it had actually found its way within the precincts of the royal palace; and in his dreams, the happy physician would see the image of a certain "sanguine-dyed hand" beckoning him away to meet the guerdons which honour had in store for him. In other words, he looked confidently forward to being made a baronet.

Thus, who could be happier or more successful than himself?—and, let us add, as a tribute to his worthy character, to whose success are we more glad to bear witness?

If there was one thing he regretted amidst all this transport of success, it was, that his hand would be getting every day more and more out of practice in "throwing a fly!" But what of that? There must be some little hindrances in all things to the complete fulness of human satisfaction. And

if his hand was out of practice in waving a fly-rod, it was richly "*in practice*" in another—a loftier, and more profitable way! A "fisher of men," we may call him now, instead of a "fisher" of char, trout, or grayling.

On his leaving, as we described some time ago, the neighbourhood of the lakes, he had left Miss Lawton, the lady, in fact, he had just been visiting, convalescent; but on herself and Mr. Lawton coming up to town for the "season," they did not neglect to apply again for the advice and assistance of their friend Doctor Esdaile, to complete the restoration of the fair patient's health. No less pleased were they than surprised to find their former merry friend now become "a great man;" and though he had always been considered as sensible and clever as a medical adviser, as he was lively and good-humoured as a man, yet little did they dream of finding him with "growing honours" so "thick upon him."

Such, however, was the result of his being "recommended amongst the first circles," which was sufficient to induce everybody, from a palace down to a kitchen, or up to an attic, to imagine that no one could cure him so well as Dr. Esdaile!

Of course, he was looked on with increased respect by Mr. Lawton and his fair daughter Laura, and was a constant guest at their house;

in fact, it was whispered by those who knew the parties, that the interest that our friend Esdaile has been witnessed as feeling with regard to the heiress of Blacktarn was likely to be at length avowed by an offer of his hand.

But this was at present but an "on-dit," and it must remain for a little while longer uncertain how far such report was justifiable or not. We will not anticipate the conclusion further than to observe that Mr. Lawton felt very warmly the kindness and attention his "old friend Esdaile" had shewn his daughter throughout her indisposition; and the fair Laura herself, too, would acknowledge that she felt fully sensible of his extreme attention.

If this avowal does not wear the complexion of "encouragement" of addresses, we do not know what does! But to follow the steps, or rather carriage wheels, of our physician, to the next patient whom he went to see in the round of his sanatory visitation.

This patient was no other than Mr. Howbiggen, who had been rapidly "breaking up" of late; and, in fact, our philosophical physician, in going to visit him, could not help feeling how melancholy and futile were all efforts to patch up, preserve, and prolong the span of frail, perishable, mortal clay, when Nature had once set her seal of growing dissolution on it. Of all men, physicians must be

alive to the melancholy truth what mere walking shadows we are. Our light of life, is it not vague, dubious, shifting, and evanescent as a shadow on a wall seen beneath the fitful glare of torchlight?

With feelings and reflections akin to these, our Galen sped onwards to see the old cynic, who still growled, indeed, mechanically, as we shall perceive anon, but whose growlings were fast doomed to fade into a murmur—a breath—silence eternal!

This thought alone will make us feel the wisdom, since life's span is so fleeting, of letting the passing "dream" be as cheerful and lively as we can. And even if disappointment punish us, (as was the case with Howbiggen,) yet, let us not punish ourselves still worse, by suffering this sore to rankle into one universal gangrene of the mind, rendering the very atmosphere of our social existence noxious and respiring plague.

On rolled the chariot; and to descend, now, from the notice of men (don't start, reader!) to dogs, or rather ascend, according to Byron, who says that "dogs are our betters far." Well; by the side of the carriage trotted a dog, not of the Danish or Hungarian species, generally used as carriage dogs, but a quadruped which by its shaggy water-spaniel's coat we recognise as poor Gertrude's old favourite, honest Bryan.

"Poor dumb hanimal!" would exclaim a person

who is also an old acquaintance of ours and the reader; "he don't thrive so well in this town, here, as he did when he beat up water-fowl in the sedges by Derwentwater side or along Buttermere. Bless you! I've seen him start many a coote, moorhen, and diver, while the Doctor, his master, was a-flinging his 'fly' hard by. O Lord! O Lord! if I don't miss the country as much as Bryan does! And though it was somewhat hard work carrying luggage from Keswick to Buttermere, across that towering pull of a hill, yet, 'dang it!' I loves the place, and often wishes to be back again."

The voice that uttered this strain of moralizing was that (as the reader has perhaps anticipated) of honest Jock, *ci-devant* Buttermere carrier. This forlorn worthy we remember being cast on the wide world, subsequently to his leaving the service of Hatfield under the name of Renmore, and proceeding to "Lunnun" to look for a place.

If Jock came up to London forlorn, much more so became he when he sought in vain "for a situation." He was wandering disconsolately along the street, one day, when a gentleman put his head out at the window of a carriage, and called to him by name.

Jock raised his rufine numskull, and gaped round in the direction of the voice,—when, lo and behold, he recognised in the traits of the gentleman who

greeted him those of our esteemed Doctor. This kind-hearted person soon made himself acquainted with Jock's history, which the Buttermere Touchstone delivered in doleful key. He was taught to sound a more cheerful note when the Doctor engaged him as a servant; and directing him to proceed to his house, told him he should be forthwith installed and liveried, as one of his under-footmen.

Jock's delight was great; for not only had he thus miraculously stepped into a "capitable place," but he found, on being installed in the Doctor's house, some old acquaintance amongst the domestics. Nor was he least of all pleased with the recognition of poor Bryan, who, though but a "poor dumb hanimal," found a tongue to greet his old acquaintance Jock's admission into a family of which he, Bryan, was certainly one; "as much as if (to use Jock's words) he wor a Christian." Jock and Bryan were from this day inseparable companions; and as the favourite dog was unable to receive so much of his master's caresses as formerly, he the more attached himself to Jock, who supplied the loss of them to him.

Accordingly, as Jock mounted behind the carriage as footman, with his long gilt-topped stick, Bryan would run by the carriage side, where we find him now.

Having, then, paid a due tribute of recognition

to these minor “*dramatis personæ*,” we will proceed with the progress of the physician and our story at the same time.

The hour being now at hand of his arrival to see his patient Mr. Howbiggen, he was looked for by that careful and expectant spinster, Miss Hetty Howbiggen.

“I suppose,” she said, as she poured out for her invalid brother a tumbler of orgeat,—“I suppose you have heard the report as to Doctor Esdaile?”

“No,—what?—gone ‘salmon-fishing’ up the Thames?—ugh!—or what?” for at the era now in view, the Thames was famous for its salmon, and we might have said with Fluellen of the river Wye, “there is goot salmons in it.”

“No, not exactly this; but that he is appointed king’s physician, and is to be made a baronet.”

“Ugh!—umph!—every one is made a baronet now-a-days, who is in favour at court, or can lend government any money. You may buy titles of Pitt as you may buy gilt-gingerbread in a fair!—Ugh!—umph!”

“It is, begging your pardon, my good brother Tobias, a feather in his cap,—and a well-merited reward too; for he is a very estimable as well as clever person.”

“May be so!” growled the cynic; “I was

always sick of his pretended 'system.' Well; he does better, perhaps, by eccentricity and originality, or, to speak plainly, 'quackery,' than by any other plan,—ugh! The stupid, idle world always gapes at anything in the shape of novelty, and will run crazy after the greatest imposition, so as the gulled dolts fancy they have found something new. Ugh! He never cured me—I know that."

"And who ever could cure you? begging your pardon," replied Miss Howbiggen, in as mild a tone of expostulation as she could, fearing to irritate him by a less gentle style of remonstrance. "Who could ever cure that sad fretfulness under which you have so long laboured? He has cured thousands of others—Miss Lawton, for instance, amongst the rest."

"Glad of it; they are fortunate in getting well, that is all,—little thanks, I take it, are due to him,—ugh!"

"Ah, poor Laura Lawton! she received no small shock from the circumstances in which her name was so wound up with the story of her father's former 'guest,' and, as the world will have it, her admirer at one time! I am sure she is much indebted to the assiduity and treatment of Dr. Esdaile for her recovery."

"Ugh! that may be. Meantime, your reverting

to the story of that person, who it seems took us all in so, reminds me of a lesson resulting from it, which I trust you will not forget."

"A lesson?—what lesson?—am I, pray, a forger? or want lessons to keep me from the gallows?" said Miss Howbiggen, with a rather indignant toss of the head.

"Not exactly! But you may learn not to meddle or interfere with persons about whom you know nothing. To this, I may add, that it is to you this man owes his death. You set the 'hound' Quandish on the scent for him on both occasions, both at Buttermere and again in town here——"

"This is too bad!"

—"And all to gratify a vain, idle, impertinent (excuse me, it is the fact) inclination for prating, and the gratification of mere curiosity. It was you led this Quandish on the pursuit to Lord Balderston's——"

Pray, how was I to——"

—"Good Lord! good Lord! what mischief arises often from what trifling causes. Through your idle curiosity, this man, that had outwitted so many clever heads, was at length consigned to doom,——ugh! So it has been ever since the world began; the merest trifles and accidents have produced the most weighty results. Why, it was a woman's gratification of her palate that lost Paradise." . . .

But just here, much to the relief of Miss Howbiggen, all further parley was interrupted by the announcement of Dr. Esdaile.

She was not sorry to take this opportunity of making her retreat; for her conscience whispered to her that the objurgation she had undergone was disagreeable, because it was—too just. She endeavoured, however, to quiet the tacit suggestions of self-reproach, as she said, pettishly—

“Good gracious! Was I, pray, to blame if the man was found amenable to the laws of his country? Dear me! what difference could my just mentioning the circumstance of Mr. Capper-gill being like Hatfield make in this matter? Could it alter, pray, the fact of his being guilty or not?”

The weaker and more fallacious the sophistry was, with which the tacitly self-condemned spinster strove to quiet her conscience, the stronger, did she feel, was the force of her plain-spoken brother's reproof. But to leave her, and return to the invalid, who was now in company with his medical adviser.

“Ah! pulse a little quicker,” said the physician, as he looked at his watch and counted the pulsations. This was the effect of the patient's having just now exerted himself in conveying the “fine moral lesson” that was so *palatable* to his sister.

“Ugh, is it?” replied the cynic. “I’m glad to hear it. I had scarcely any pulse at all this morning when I got up.”

“Oh! we are doing better, doubtless,” observed the physician, who, though he could tolerably well guess the diseased cause of this “aggravation” of the pulse, was willing to speak as cheerfully as possible to his patient. “We are stronger and better—much!—the orgeat and the beef-tea seem to agree well with us. Nothing better for the chest than the first—nothing more strengthening for the system than the last; besides, you like them better, I think, than anything else, and——”

“Therefore, I suppose, they are the best things I could have,—he, he! Oh! I know what you have to say, my worthy Doctor. Not all your beef-tea and orgeat can prolong the lease of my life another year.”

“Another year?” thought the physician; “no, nor another week, perhaps,—nor even another twenty-four hours!” His words, however, to his patient were more encouraging:

“Oh dear! do not talk in this gloomy style, my dear Sir. I repeat it, we are much better to-day, singularly improved, and——”

“Oh, pooh!—stuff and nonsense!” interrupted the testy patient, who we remember always evinced

immense impatience at any encouraging representation of his condition, as if he really preferred being a valetudinarian and ill. "Oh, pooh!—you always talk in this way, and try to persuade a man he is well when he perhaps has not a week's life in him!—this is the old story."

"My dear Mr. Howbiggen, do not excite yourself, I beg of you!" said the physician, mildly, and really concerned to see his testy friend doing himself so much mischief by needlessly irritating himself. But this gentle remonstrance was of little avail, for the dyspeptic, and we may add, dying man, continued to vent his characteristic spleen; and, illustrative of the "ruling passion strong in death," proceeded to grumble on—

"Pshaw! you have always declared you could cure me. You pretended to do what I always told you was impossible,—you—you—"

But here the sick man suddenly sank back in his chair, exhausted by the efforts into which his spleen had forced him. Dr. Esdaile instantly rang the bell in some alarm, and summoned Miss Howbiggen once again to the side of her brother's arm-chair, recommending he should be instantly removed to bed, and saying he could, he feared, be of no avail in recruiting exhausted nature, further than by the remedies he had already prescribed.

After having seen his patient removed to his bed-room, and begging Miss Howbiggen to dispatch a message to him instantly, in case any more serious crisis should arrive, the Doctor took his leave, not holding out much hope to her of her brother's recovery.

"He sleeps now," said the physician, in a subdued tone. "Should anything occur to increase your alarm, I shall be at Lord Balderton's; send for me there; I will lose no time in coming to you."

So saying, the physician took his leave, and at the due period repaired to Lord Balderton's to dinner, where Mr. and Miss Lawton were to be guests. They and the rest of the party had arrived, with the exception of Miss Howbiggen, who, as we have seen, was more painfully employed than in dining out,—when the attention of all was called to the announcement by the servant into the drawing-room, of "Sir Richard Esdaile."

In fact, the patent for conferring the "degree of a baronet to himself and the heirs male of," &c. had been that day graciously granted to the estimable no less than fortunate physician; and sincere and universal were the congratulations offered him by the group whom he now met.

By none were they more heartily expressed than

by the lord of Blacktarn, nor more kindly and graciously than by the fair Laura, as she accepted the arm Sir Richard offered her in handing her down to the dining-room. Our new baronet's conversation was divided between Lady Balderton and Laura, next to whom he sate. Lady Balderton expressed herself much concerned at learning that her cousin Miss Howbiggen's absence from the party was in consequence of so serious an occasion.

"Nay," said Sir Richard, "I expect every minute to be summoned to the bedside of my poor cynical friend, for whom, in spite of his dyspepsia, I always cherished a considerable respect and esteem. He often indulged in caustic diatribes, from the mere 'sour satisfaction' it afforded him to do so, rather than from any really uncharitable feeling. On the point of being taken from us, we will look leniently on his failings."

So spoke the benevolent physician. After the withdrawal of the ladies, the conversation proceeded by Lord Balderton's congratulating Mr. Lawton on having got his bill through the house for improving the line of road across the Borrodaile tract. His lordship had "taken charge," as it is called in parliamentary language, of the bill.

"Ah!" said the metaphorical Lord; "the country is really indebted to you for that 'spirit' of im-

provement which has ‘germinated’ forth with such ‘radical’ benefits, and such ‘radiant and fructifying’ results.”

Sir Richard could hardly forbear a smile at the amusing jumble of metaphor that characterized, as usual, his lordship’s “peculiar” style, as he observed, looking as grave as he could—

“Yes, indeed, my Lord, the neighbourhood of Borrodaile and Keswick is really seriously indebted to our friend Mr. Lawton’s efforts at improving the lines of communication. We were afraid at one time,” he continued, exhibiting a little of his favourite inclination to banter, “that he would have been so indefatigable as to ‘improve’ away all the beauties of the route; but he has, in the present instance, agreeably surprised us, and improved away the defects.”

“On my word, Sir Richard, you pay me a compliment!” said the lord of Blacktarn, sipping his claret. “Ahem!—ay! I well remember mentioning, amongst other projected improvements, this plan of mine for improving the Borrodaile route to that singular character—Hatfield!”

“God bless me!” exclaimed his metaphorical lordship,—“singular character, indeed! You may well say so. To think that in the breast of a disguised criminal should ‘lurk’ and ‘well forth’ the superior powers that, as the private secretary of a

minister, 'coruscated' so in him when residing with me !"

"If your lordship had reason to admire his talent under the name of Capperhill, I must also bear testimony to the polish and good sense of his remarks and manner under that of Jackson."

And here Lord Balderton's amazement was yet further awakened by learning from the poet Woodland,—for it was himself who now spoke,—that it was no other than the same Protean actor who had performed the part of old Jackson,—the venerable stranger at Buttermere church,—and the Quaker lastly at Ravenglass,—quite as happily as that of the confidential secretary Capperhill.

"Ay; but you should have seen him, my Lord, in the 'part' of Colonel Renmore; his 'acting' was perfection," said Sir Richard; "if the adage is true that *ars est celare artem*."

"Ah!" replied his lordship, with due seriousness, "it is really a matter of vivid drawback to the interests of society that his talents were not more properly conglomerated in the focus of some more immaculate exercise."

Balderdash here reached its climax, while Mr. Lawton's solemn physiognomy wore a complete "Amen" stamped on it, to the above sentiment of his lordship; and an awful pause ensued for a few moments, forming, in the singular words of his lord-

ship, a “vivid drawback” on the conversation for this brief interval. Woodsland turned to a poetical friend sitting next him, and remarked—

“I declare I never had a more agreeable ten minutes’ conversation with any one than with the seeming old Mr. Jackson, by the side of Windermere. You had just left us, I remember, to proceed to town about the publication of your new poem; and really, with regard to this subject, I may congratulate you on having received the approbation which is your desert, considering how bitter and malignant is the vein of criticism in these times. I admire the poem very much; the action is vivid and varied, and the colouring highly poetical—nay, grand.”

“You speak with the partiality and kindness of a friend and brother writer,” replied Routhmore; for it was himself. “Alas! I know myself, and feel that, from the habits of solitude I have been accustomed to throughout the earlier stage of manhood, I have indulged more in pursuing images that my reading supplied, or my fancy conjured up, than studied the workings of the human heart, and the more true and faithful pictures of life. But to return to the period when this Jackson——”

But here the reminiscences of the brother bards were broken off by the rising of the rest of the

circle, as there was now a general movement towards the drawing-room, to rejoin the ladies.

“A delightful improvement,” observed Mr. Lawton to Lady Balderton, “this glass-door opening into the conservatory,—delightful ! It renders the drawing-room a perfect paradise. Laura, my dear, I don’t think we have any geraniums at Blacktarn of so large a size as that ;” and he directed her attention to one in particular ; but Laura was engaged in conversation with Sir Richard Esdaile, and answered merely by a smile and nod of assent to the appeal to her.

Lady Balderton replied—

“Yes, indeed ; the alteration you observe renders the room more cheerful—especially by lamp or candle light, as now. But what are you regarding so particularly ?”

“Bless me !” observed our Blacktarn genius ; “I have now made a discovery ;” and turning to the two poets who were standing on the other side of Lady Balderton, conversing with her, and admiring the gaiety and bloom of the conservatory,—“I perceive now why it is you poets are so partial to the epithet, ‘blue hills.’”

“Indeed !” replied Woodsland, smiling ; “the colouring is perhaps only in fancy ; it may be an illusion, nothing more.”

“I beg your pardon,” replied the experimental

philosopher, solemnly; "it is the effect of light. But only see how little things may be brought to prove and illustrate the loftiest and grandest phenomena? I was looking, for instance, at those dark green leaves under the lamp, and lo and behold! they wore a tint perfectly cerulean—a lovely azure. It is the effect (ahem!) of a combination of the yellow light of the lamp with the green tint of the leaf:—so the hills that you call blue wear that appearance under the golden lustre of the mighty lamp of day, as it blends and harmonizes with the green. The effect of light, as influencing colour, is thus witnessed (ahem!) in the petty instance before us, as plainly and satisfactorily, (ahem!) as in the grander instance of your 'blue hills.'"

"Upon my word, very philosophical and clever!" observed Sir Richard, who had advanced to the spot, on seeing his worthy Blacktarn friend descanting with such apparent gravity and interest on the favourite theme of what he was pleased to call experimental philosophy.

"Not only has Mr. Lawton spoken philosophically, but poetically, too," observed Routhmore. "Nay, he has justified us poets in the use of an epithet which was adopted without much consideration of the 'philosophical' reasons for its propriety."

He smiled as he spoke, and as though a little irony tinged his remark, at the expense of the lover of improvement and experiment.

A smile, possibly, played upon the countenances of all present, with the same characteristic; but it was nothing in comparison to the smile of triumph which defied all irony of the philosopher himself; and he was about to descant further on the beauties of Lady Balderton's conservatory, when a gloom was thrown over the circle by the entrance of a domestic with a note for Sir Richard, the contents of which he made known, and then instantly withdrew. His immediate attendance was necessary at the bed-side of Mr. Howbiggen; and thither we must accompany the physician on his melancholy commission.

Softly he entered the dying man's room. Miss Howbiggen was supporting his head in her arms, as he feebly drew the breath that was fast fading for ever. The hue of death was on his brow: his lip was fallen: his eye without speculation or recognition of objects. He knew not the physician as he approached. He had been delirious at the time Sir Richard was sent for, and still muttered incoherent sentences, as misty dreams vaguely floated before the dying sense. "Lost — thousands — minister — Give me back — give me —"

They waited to hear what further syllable should escape; but though the lips seemed in act to enunciate, the voice was waited for in vain. The cynic's soul had fled while his lips murmured, to the last moment of life, their morbid tale of disappointed views.

It was the "phantom" of the self-punished man that now was supported in the arms of her who had long been the kind companion of his dis-tempered day, and had shewn, whatever her foibles and vanities might be, much forbearance and sisterly regard for the late fretful and sick-minded being, whose better qualities we have already done justice to, in the kind words which our friend Sir Richard Esdaile expressed of him at Lord Balderton's.

To draw a veil, then, over the grim picture of death, no less than the imperfections of the deceased, we will proceed to gratify at once the reader's curiosity to learn how far the "on-dits" relative to the surmised nuptials of Sir Richard and Miss Lawton were right or otherwise.

In a word, they were on the present occasion happily verified, by this interesting event taking place, at Mr. Lawton's residence in town, at no very great distance of time from that just referred to; after which event he returned to Blacktarn, which was now, however, become a perfect solitude to him since it was deprived of the presence of Laura, of

whom he was devotedly fond. He therefore wrote an earnest request to his son-in-law to make up his mind to quit London, and take up his abode entirely at Blacktarn. He added a strong recommendation in the postscript, which was—

“ You have forgotten to throw a fly by this time, and I am sure will not be sorry to bring your hand in again ; for the meers and brooks are fuller than ever of char—the finest you can imagine ! And the improvements at Blacktarn are (ahem !) immense ! So pray make up your mind to come down with Laura at as early an opportunity as you can fix.”

Such was the postscript to the worthy Mr. Lawton's letter : nor did it want an advocate to urge its suit in Laura.

In a word, as soon as Sir Richard was able, with a good grace and due respect to his royal patron, to give up his “ very successful and honourable career” in town, he acquiesced in the wishes of Mr. Lawton and Lady Esdaile. Nor did he repent his step, for he went with the gracious permission and kind remembrances of royalty ; and when he had left the din, and moil, and hubbub of the great Babylon (and of the world no less) behind him, to meet the eloquent joy of nature, and the peaceful murmur of his favourite brooks, he was truly happy. Happier yet was he, when he was

met by the smile of Laura, as he recognised in her a partner in the content and cheerfulness of heart he experienced.

Jock really grinned with so sincere a satisfaction at the first intimation, on the part of his master, of his intended return to their native wilds, that the poor fellow's whole face was but one uncouth grin—a “stereotyped” grimace, that it was amusing no less than “delightful” to behold!

Bryan, too, was conscious of a bustle and stir, and barked and ran about, partaking of the universal excitement; but he barked with a true consciousness of the cause of pleasure, when he once again found himself trotting by the side of his master, along the sedgy banks of meer and streamlet, starting the stray bittern from her nest, or darting joyously into the flood, after coote or mallard, that skimmed the plashed wave with eager cry and outstretched throat to avoid him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul : and words it gave
Which might not be withstood.”

SHELLEY.

“ This is the fairest village lass that ever
Ran on the green sward. Nothing she does or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself;
Too noble for this place !”

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE are passages in our story which will yet occupy us for a brief period, ere it reaches its close, and which took place previously to the events with which our preceding chapter ended. To the mention of these passages we accordingly address ourselves, in the fulfilment of our duty to the reader.

Some months, then, had elapsed since the melancholy occurrences had taken place of which Carlisle was the scene, when a party of distinguished persons, engaged in a tour through the lake region, arrived on the heights overlooking Buttermere.

It is with melancholy interest that we retrace the spot where we meet them, since it was that where Gertrude first shone on us in her beauty. We can picture her as she stood,—her gladsome, her guileless heart smiling through her unclouded brow; the light of love shedding a yet brighter lustre, to augment that in which her beauty had already enshrined her. But now, how altered!

If the haunts of Loch Katrine and the Trosachs, at a later period, brought so many votaries to the scene where the spirit of the “Lake Lady” presided, while the world bowed before the spell of the wizard-minstrel that summoned it there,—not less, in proportion, was its desire manifested, though blent with feelings of a more painful curiosity, to visit the wild haunts of Buttermere.

Many a foot sought to track the scenes where the “Beauty of Buttermere” had trod a path of so much bitter interest. That anxiety to catch a glimpse of “the Beauty,” to which we have at an earlier period of our humble memorial borne witness, was now indeed augmented,—and from how unhappy a cause! The “Beauty of Buttermere” and her inauspicious fate were in every mouth.

The party of persons already mentioned were engaged in conversation on the all-engrossing topic, as they stood on the height looking towards the

village. The name of the Beauty of Buttermere had scarcely escaped their lips, when an airy female form passed them, as it lightly darted up the ascent, and hastened onward upon its way. There was a wildness mingled with much loveliness about her, that at once attracted their attention. The very wildness of the countenance increased the charm of its beauty ; and this feature was well accompanied by the graceful negligence of her attire, which floated loosely round that figure of more than earthly lightness, as it almost appeared to them to be, in their mingled surprise and admiration. It seemed as if some fair spirit of the wild and lovely haunt around them had suddenly beamed upon their sight. The soft wind that sprung up from the waters of the meer, played with her luxuriant golden locks, that floated over her neck on either side.

The vision-like illusion which the form before them presented, was aided by the extreme and delicate paleness of the brow ; while the airiness of the form, as it floated past, seemed indeed like the evanescence of a vision's fading light. Mark the radiance of that pure pale brow ! That delicate cheek too,—how it touched the hearts of those who gazed on the tenderness of its waning bloom, which was marked by the hectic spot that played on it, and fatally illumined that sweet waste of beauty.

“ A heavenly being, in truth !” said a young man, eminent for his distinguished person and handsome features, addressing the lady next him : it was Horace Vermont, commonly called the “ handsome Horace.” “ I never saw a more charming object,” he continued, “ or a lovelier countenance—unless it were your Grace’s !”

“ Good Heavens ! is it possible that this can be the face of the once blooming and cheerful ‘ Maid of Buttermere ?’ ” exclaimed the Duchess, for it was indeed her Grace of Devonshire, who had fulfilled her promise of once again coming to see Gertrude. “ Poor, beautiful girl ! I remember saying to her how I hoped, the next time I saw her, to find her happier ! Poor girl !—‘ the *next* time !’ How she is altered !”

“ What, then,—is this the Beauty herself ? I suspected as much !” replied Vermont. “ I will speak to her ; for, see ! she now stands looking at us from the hill brow, and whether she is some bright Essence of another world, some nymph or spirit of these haunts, or the fair being we take her for, she seems as if she would be addressed ; and as we are taught in Hamlet that the whole spiritual conclave expects to be accosted or ‘ conjured’ first, before it will speak, I will e’en address her !”

So saying, he approached the beautiful figure,

as he asked to be directed the way to Buttermere.

“ We have wandered far, my lovely damsel, and would feign find some spot where we may recruit ourselves ?”

She did not at first answer this address to her, but stood gazing on the speaker, and apparently wrapped in some meditation that interested her ; or haply carried away on the train of some association, which his presence on that spot awakened in her mind. At length she gave way to a sort of hysterical laugh, which was plainly less the effect of ignorance or vacant folly than of a morbid state of mind, which could not be mistaken by the discernment of the party, coupled as it was with the neglect of her attire, and the wildness of expression in her countenance.

“ Good Heavens ! she is out of her mind !” remarked the Duchess, in a lowered tone, and indicative of her concern. “ Let us listen,—she is about to speak.”

With another hysterical laugh, the unhappy girl proceeded to reply to Vermont’s demand, of pointing out the way from the devious spot where they were, to the village,—talking as much to herself as to him—which more and more marked her distraction.

“ Hah, hah ! Why, they were the very words

he said to me when we first met ; and he was much such another as you," she continued, in an incoherent manner, and with a stare of mingled pleasure and surprise, as she regarded fixedly the traits of the young and handsome Vermont ; " but his hair," she said, looking again, " was a shade darker than yours, and his voice had more music—but speak again, and I shall know better !" and she paused, as if waiting to hear him speak.

The tears came into the eyes of the Duchess, and the ladies with her. In fact, it was all that Vermont even could do, as he gazed on this wreck of once cheerful loveliness, to maintain a voice of firmness, as he said, " You will go with us, perhaps, to the village, and conduct us yourself? Will you accompany me?"

" You—you ! no, you are not he !" she continued, after a pause. " Do you think I cannot tell ? I could tell him from a thousand ! I could always tell his voice—how could I do otherwise ? (and she laughed wildly,) for my heart was tuned to it. It used to seem, as he spoke, as if my own soul found expression in his language ; yes, yes !" and here for a while she turned her eyes away from Vermont's face, and seemed lost in her dream ; when, suddenly turning to him again, she exclaimed, " No, you are not he ; I thought you were at first, for I fancy sometimes I see him, and

yet I know he is gone!—know he is gone!” she repeated, as she fixed her eyes on the ground, while her head drooped, and relapsing deeply into her musing fit, she stood motionless as some “fair triumph of the sculptor’s art.”

“Poor lovely creature!” exclaimed Velmont; “her thoughts are running on dear yet bitter remembrances!”

“How exquisitely beautiful she is,” said the Duchess, regarding her through the tears that dimmed her eyes. “I wonder whether she would remember me were I to address her;—though it is perhaps as well I should not speak to her, as the circumstance of my acquaintance with her (if she could be rendered sensible of it) might only increase her pain.”

“What,—as to the reprieve?” observed Velmont; but scarcely had the words escaped his lips, but the lovely object of their commiseration started from her dream, and, looked hastily round, as if she had caught the import of Velmont’s remark, and snatching from her bosom a scroll of paper, hurried onwards as she cried—

“It is here! Don’t stop me; I shall be too late!”

And on Velmont’s following her with the request to let him look at the paper, and speak to her but a moment longer, she only replied in the

same incoherent and anxious words, as she hurried eagerly onward, and had speedily vanished from the sight of the party, vision-like, as she had arisen on it.

“ I must not lose sight of her yet !” exclaimed Vermont. “ Never in my life was I sensible of so painful a subject of interest. She is beautiful to a marvel, despite the effects of her suffering. What she must have been when in the bloom of health and gaiety of heart I can well imagine ; but I should scarcely deem it possible to meet any human creature of more beauty than I have found in her, as she now is. I doubt whether the laughing bloom of health would touch the heart so much, or appear more really lovely, than the tenderness of sorrow, the expression of sweet yet sad remembrances, that is now the soul of her countenance ! Her features, her complexion, her hair—they are all loveliness ! It is scarcely possible she could (at least in my estimation) be more an object of admiration or interest. Let us follow on her track, if but to come up with her for a moment more before we quit Buttermere.”

“ Indeed, she may well win your heart, Horace, for she has won the hearts of all here !” replied the Duchess, as she proceeded, with the rest of the party, along the track where Gertrude had vanished from them.

As they turned now the angle of the crag whence they descended, they caught a glimpse of that light form, and still kept it in view until they saw it stop, like a wandering light that suddenly stays it in its fitful career over the barren mazes of some desolate moor. Barren, too, and desolate was the spot where Gertrude's form was now seen to arrest its flight, and the party were afforded an opportunity of coming up with her.

It was a naked space of earth over which she paused, and which bore marks of having once been the site of some habitation; while the scathed remains of rafters, of shattered brickwork, and mortared wall, bore evident testimony of its having been burnt to the ground.

“A fit home for him!” she cried, with a wild laugh of exultation,—“a fit home for the heartless, pitiless betrayer! Let him abide with nakedness and desolation!” and as she spoke, her countenance wore a flush of indignation that heightened the wild loveliness of its expression, and she seized a piece of burnt wood, as she darted into the middle of the ruin, waving it, as though she fancied she was firing the building. “Ay, burn the roof over his head!—you may burn it! if you do not, the lightnings of heaven itself will seek out the heartless being it hides, and destroy him! Burn it! you may—you may!”

While the party were yet engaged in painful conjectures as to the cause of her present excitement, and as Vermont, seeing her exhaustion, was about to approach in order to offer her support, their attention was suddenly turned in an opposite direction.

They were made sensible of the cries of an elderly and respectable looking female, who hastened up to the spot, wringing her hands and exclaiming, "My daughter! my poor, poor child—where have you wandered to?" But perceiving the presence of the party near the spot, she ceased her cries, while she addressed a hasty excuse.

"Pardon me, ladies, I am her mother—pardon me!" and hastening up to her child, she spoke to her through her tears, begging her, with much kindness, (a kindness taught by the suffering she now deplored,) to return home with her.

Nor was her endeavour without success; while Vermont and those with him would willingly have made inquiries as to the reason of that which had just excited in them so much painful surprise. But they felt that the present was not precisely the occasion to gratify their melancholy curiosity, nor the parent indeed, the person that delicacy would permit them to question concerning the suffering of her child, however much their sympathies

might be awakened for both the one and the other.

With various reflections of concern they pursued their way to where the Duchess's carriage was waiting for her, on the Keswick road, at the head of the lake, and not far from the spot where the Howbiggens had lately taken up their residence. The different equipages, too, of the rest of the party were drawn up near the same spot.

As they were pursuing their way by the lakeside, they met a person whose eloquent eye and benign aspect inspired at once interest and esteem in those who contemplated his countenance, and made them wish to know him if they had not this pleasure already.

"We will inquire of this gentleman," said the Duchess, "for an explanation of that which delicacy deterred us from asking of her mother. Perhaps he is a resident near the spot, and will be able to inform us."

Vermont accordingly, bowing to the person in question, related what had happened, with expressions of their surprise and concern at the circumstances. "She was at length," he continued, speaking of the beautiful and unhappy subject of their inquiries, "removed from the spot by her mother."

“Yes,” replied the person to whom they addressed themselves; “her mother is, I am happy to say, making up, by due kindness and attention, for a good deal of mistaken severity with which she treated poor Gertrude some time ago. In fact, she is herself an object of compassion, for the constant self-accusation with which she visits herself on that account. The fact is, she erred more through want of discernment than any natural unkindness of disposition; but a low *tartuffe*, a pretended religious character, having gained an ascendancy over her mind, prevailed much with her in urging his suit to her daughter; which being repelled by Gertrude, brought on her the displeasure of her parent. The sympathy of the people shewed itself bitterly on the side of Gertrude, and against the mock-preacher, when his real character became known. It was anything but that which he had deceived them and Gertrude’s weak parent into believing. In fact, you are all aware how the unfortunate Hatfield was betrayed by the man he had formerly so much befriended.”

“And was this mock-preacher the person?” interrupted Velmont. “I wonder not at the unhappy girl manifesting the sense of injury which she did.”

“He was, and you will consequently be little

surprised that the angry populace razed to the ground and burned the building (the dissenting chapel) which had been devoted to religious mockery—rather than religion—by this pseudo-saint. Poor Gertrude fancies in her distraction she is firing the building, when she comes to this spot.”

“It is indeed little matter of surprise that the people burned the building,” exclaimed Vermont. “But was there not some story about this man having lost his life from the violent usage of the populace at Carlisle?”

“Whether he lost his life or not I am unable to say; certain it is he disappeared in a strange manner shortly after that manifestation of their loathing of him, as being the persecutor of the unfortunate girl you have lately seen, and of the person also who possessed her affections. What became of this Quandish, as he called himself, subsequently to this occurrence, no one knows—at least, no one can say with any certainty. If any one is likely to know, it is a singular old man, an old seaman, well known in this neighbourhood and the whole country round.”

“Is it the person they call Mike?” inquired the Duchess, calling to mind the stories she had heard concerning this singular character, on the occasion of her former visit to the region of the lakes.

Having been answered in the affirmative, she re-

verted to that period, and entered into a conversation with her informant, relative to the various past occurrences, in connexion with the singular story of Hatfield and the lovely being whose fatal affection for him had involved her in so distressful a doom.

At length having arrived at the spot where the carriages were drawn up, the Duchess, accompanied by the rest of the party, took her leave of her informant, with the acknowledgments of herself and Vermont. She did not forget at the same time to express, with her characteristic kindness of heart, the regret she felt at being unable to alleviate the condition of the hapless 'Beauty of Buttermere,' in meeting whom their curiosity had been so painfully gratified.

"Perhaps," replied their informant, as he withdrew, "a melancholy interest has been added in seeing her as you have. She is as some once cherished and lovely flower now run wild, and wandering over the ruin of that abode where she had been cultured and cherished. That wild flower is not more beautiful in its desolation, than the lonely and lovely human-flower that now thus mournfully decorates these haunts."

So saying, he withdrew, while Vermont remarked of him—

“The person with whom we have just been conversing is no common character; his countenance alone assured me of that, before his lips confirmed it. He must be one of those ‘Genii of the lake,’ as I have heard an acquaintance of ours—Sir Richard Esdaile—call them, that render these haunts classic ground.”

“Doubtless he must be so!” replied the Duchess. “I knew not whether most to admire his benevolence of heart, as he related the melancholy story on which our conversation turned, or the happy imagery with which at times he unconsciously decorated the commonest subjects that arose.”

“Certainly an interesting person, and one who would make a delightful Cicerone in this romantic region!” remarked Velmont.

“Indeed, the poetry and beauty of these scenes require some spirit kindred to their own charm, to interpret them aright. It is true, they would almost inspire poetry and harmony in the dullest and most discordant spirits; but still it is not every one, however much he may feel their appeal to the heart, that is able to give adequate expression to it. This is the triumph of the poet, and this we have witnessed in the person who has just left us. I have little doubt it must be Golefield himself.”

Nor was the fair speaker mistaken. It was indeed the bard and philosopher himself, with whom they had fallen in. He was, when he met them, proceeding, as was his usual custom, to the village, to inquire after the ill-fated maiden of Buttermere, and offer, with his characteristic benevolence, what consolation he might to her unhappy parent.

Different indeed was the aspect now presented by the premises of the once neat and pretty little hostelrie, where it has been our lot so often to invite the reader.

He would scarcely recognise in those untrimmed turf-borders,—those unweeded walks,—that rough unmown surface of the lawn,—those rambling and unpruned tendrils of shrub and flower,—the once graceful and chastely decorated garden that erewhile witnessed the care of Gertrude. As everything was neglect and desolation without, so all was mournfulness and gloom within.

And now we have discharged our duty to the reader, in tracing all that his curiosity may demand, relative to the different persons of our story, with one exception. He will readily guess this is spoken with reference to the ancient mariner, who, independently of the singular characteristics that render him a subject of interest in himself, demands yet

further of us a parting tribute of consideration, in return for the feeling with which his heart and energies have glowed, in behalf of our ill-fated hero and heroine. We may possibly, also, in our search for Mike, discover some glimpse of the uncertain fate of the miscreant Simmonds, or Quandish.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Heav’n rest her soul !
Round the lake light music stole,
And her shade was seen to glide,
Beauteous o’er the fatal tide.”

MOORE.

WHERE the blue lightnings are writhing round those gaunt forest trunks, and the leaves dance in weird mazes at their base—where the belated rustic hears unearthly sounds in the moaning wintry blast, and sees phantoms in every white gleam through the forest vista, and in every pallid trunk clad in its hoary moss,—an aged step is seen to pause, an aged silvery brow is seen to gaze. And the dim light, as it shews the countenance, reveals there the different passions too, with which he gazes.

Ghastly was the brow, and pale with the workings of passion, in its alternate vicissitudes of scorn and of regret,—of fearful triumph and bitter commiseration,—as his breast was variously swayed by the

objects we are about to mention, and on which he gazed. Ghastly his brow, and ghastly indeed those objects to which it was raised.

As the lightning flash glanced over him, it disclosed the countenance of the ancient mariner—it was old Mike. He was on the spot which our readers will call to mind as that where Hatfield had made remarks upon the skeleton, in his last attempt at escape towards the sea-coast.

We remember the strained jocularity, whose smile was not of the heart, with which he had attempted to hush the drear presentiment that whispered within him, as he gazed on that grim testimony of vindicated justice. There glared it still,—that skeleton—grinning as though in ghastly glee, as it danced amid the blast-rocked boughs, to the funereal minstrelsy of their sighing, and the clank of its own iron winding sheet—its own chains.

That grim spectacle had now its fellow, in the relics of the very being it had not long ago stared on, in dreary omen of his impending doom.*

* The frightful barbarism of “hanging in chains” was not confined to instances of murder, even so late as the period of which we here speak. Well may such a testimony of legal rigour have been abolished, as revolting to the sensibilities of an improved state of civilization! The brief experiment of its re-institution in 1831-2, of course proved abortive.

“ Ah ! that was an ill jest you made,” said the old man, as he stood looking with feelings of regret and compassion on the skeleton of Hatfield. It seemed to his fancy to commune with him, face to face, as the gaunt sockets of the skeleton glared fixedly on the brow of the ancient mariner.

He gazed, nothing appalled, on that fearful effigy of death ;—horror seemed familiar to him, and he spoke as if to a thing of life and perception, as he continued, in a strain of regretful remonstrance—

“ That was an ill jest you made when you said, when last here, to the bones that rock hard by, that your own might one day be their partner where they dance ’mid those weird-waving boughs !”

The skeleton brow bent as the wind swayed it, as though in approval of the old man’s remonstrance. The mariner paused as he gazed on it, while mournfully and slowly he shook his grey locks, following the train of painful remembrances.

After awhile, he walked past the fearful trunk, and his countenance now lost its aspect of sorrow, and compassionate remorse, in the vicissitude of sterner feeling of which he was now made sensible. Scorn, and the bitterness of mingled hate and contempt, nor less the fell triumph of conscious

revenge, were now strongly marked in its workings.

He speaks again to a thing of death—to yet another ghastly denizen of this charnel-lair of the wilderness,—to another rocking skeleton 'mid that Aceldama speaks he, where, placed in drear opposition, it faces the whitening bones of Hatfield. Not, like his, however, is it the form of one that fell by the hand of justice. It had been raised where it was, none knew by whose hand;—it was whispered, indeed, “the wizard mariner knew, and could tell.”

But none cared to question him on the circumstance;—testimony there was none, save such as that of which *he* might possibly be conscious.

With scornful lip, and indignation in his eye, as he turned his upward glance to it, thus muttered he accents, as withering as the blasts that howled round—as withering as the curse of Arimanes, or the lightning-bolt that seared the oak above him.

“Whiten thou there!—whiten thou there for thy deserts,—thou foul instrument of Fate,—thou malign battener on the life-blood of him—thy benefactor! Unsparing harasser of his hour while breath was his,—whiten thou there! Ay, face in this grim ignominy of thy death-doom the form of him thou facedest at the tribunal, where thy voice

swayed the sentence that condemned him. Exult (and didst thou not erewhile?) that thou hadst glutted thee in his life-blood? Ha, ha!" he continued, with a scornful laugh and withering glance of reproach—"I bid thee exult!—long and painfully didst thou seek him—lo, thou hast found him!—It is meet thou shouldst thus keep him company!—ha, ha!—Wither thou there—wither, wither!"

So saying, the weird mariner turned him with loathing from the object of his execration, and, casting again one mournful and compassionate glance on the relics of his favourite "fated son," as he had been used to call him, took his way slowly, and wrapt in musings solemn and sorrowful, from the spot.

Should any eye have marked him there—(all familiar as he was with the dead, and with the storm)—he seemed as though a kindred spirit among the phantoms with which the country-superstitions peopled that drear haunt. The rude dwellers round the forest border would watch Mike's lonely visitation of its recesses, and pause on the brink—for none would venture to follow him to the scene of his fearful communings. They would stay their footsteps without, as if pausing on the margin of a magic-circle, within which the wizard

alone has the talisman of entry. The "fiend" himself would not have been more shunned than the weird mariner, if perchance some peasant whose way led through the forest descried him at the wonted spot of his dreary musings.

But whither has he taken his way from that spot, as now his receding form is lost in the gloomy depths of the forest mazes?

There is a spot on the sea-coast of Ravenglass, where they will shew you, reader, a rude and lonely hut, sheltered beneath the cliff, and looking out upon the watery waste.

There the weird mariner has taken up his abode. It is the same rude asylum to which poor Gertrude had been conveyed, after the ill success of that flight of which she had been the partner. The cell where we have erewhile sought him, beneath the crags of Buttermere, is vacant now, and the fox makes its lair there, and the wild-cat, and the bat flits out at its dark cavern mouth, as the grey hues of twilight shadow the cliff-side.

The foxglove, with its rank verdure, and the deadly nightshade, interweave them with the wild-brier, to veil the entrance; yet the villagers point it out still, as once the abode of the wizard mariner; and Superstition, as wont, invests the spot with many a phantom of terror, and many a fearful re-

membrance of its weird dweller, whose communion with Spirits was currently believed by the credulous rustics.

Never since the hour when old Mike had taken his way from Carlisle, where last we met him; never since its gloomy keep had faded in the distance from his view, had he resought his wonted cavern-abode at Buttermere.

The old man's goodness of heart, and regrets for the doom of *him* in whose fortunes we have witnessed him taking so deep an interest, permitted him no longer to dwell contentedly at a spot that was fraught with the constant recollections of one who from childhood had been beloved by him; yet the kindly feelings that he cherished, scarcely less, for Gertrude, would call his step, at due periods, to wander forth to Buttermere, and ask after her health.

With this exception, the weird form of old Mike was never seen pacing along the brow that overlooks the meer, or waking the gaze of the villagers as he "glode" (in old ballad phrase) through the hamlet.

Those who would seek him—if but to ask one of the many strange and stirring tales with which his memories of the past were fraught—must look for him now in the lone hut at Ravenglass, hard by

the sea. Here the poor fisherman, here the sailor repairs, and, ere he plies his craft, asks the weird mariner "what auguries, good or ill, await his venture?"

For such, again, is the wizard character with which their superstitions invest him, and those who haply never prayed before, have muttered a prayer of propitiation, as they have fearfully crossed his ominous threshold.

Long would they linger, too, breathlessly hanging on the old man's records of marvel or of pain, and gazing, pale with awe, on the workings of that wasted yet venerable brow. Nor less have the fates of the Maiden of Buttermere, linked as they were with the destinies of the being who was dear to him, engaged the memories of old Mike; nor less has the tear been awakened from the rude hearers, as, swayed with ruth, they have listened to the record, and yielded up their hearts spell-bound.

On the last occasion that he had sought the haunts of Buttermere, to look in regret on the seared flower of beauty which its storms had strown so low, this was the tale which he brought away, as the rude village informants had related it to him:—

"We missed her one evening, and the cries of her parent asked us for her child—asked us if we

had seen her, for everywhere had she looked along the track where it had been Gertrude's wont to range, yet had found her not. Distraught though her wanderings had been, never had she failed to return home. Where was she now?

“Everywhere we sought; far as you see the venerable yew of Lorton, over every spot her foot had loved to trace! We hied us to the deserted abode where the good curate had ever taught her to seek a home—where now, in lifelessness, vacancy, and silence, the closed windows glared like dead men's eyes—where the roses straggled wild over the garden—the roses from which she would at times weave her a wreath, and set it fantastically on her head—ay! this would she do, while she paced restlessly up and down, and called for those whom she ought to meet there, and received no answer, till, frightened by the silence and the solitude, she would fly the spot as eagerly as she had sought it.

“Yes! everywhere we searched for her, along her favourite height of Melbreak too, and by the meer-side. Ay, it was there we found the wild rose-wreath which that very day she had twined round her hair. We took it up, but did not shew it her mother, as we feared to tell her what we thought.

“Our fear was that the poor lovely thing's mischance had found her a grave in the meer!—

yet we searched the lake, and dragged far and wide round that spot since called the ‘Beauty’s grave;’ but nothing found we to make true our sorrowful conjectures.

“We met one, indeed, who told us that as he had come down the slope to look (as was often his custom, he added) at the starlight, at that still hour, on the meer, he fancied he saw a ‘play’ of light on the water, more than that of the silvery flash of its starlit waves when the night-wind ripples them. Yet he was not near enough to say that it was any figure in white that he saw about to sink in the waters. Poor Gertrude’s dress was white, and we should have then known it was herself whom he must have seen; but he was unable to tell us any more.

“It was the kind-hearted man that had shewn her so much care, and was as eager as ourselves to know what had become of her. It was the man, beloved, too, by all of us, and through the whole village round,—it was Mr. Golefield; and long he aided us in our search; but we found her not. Long was it, too, before we could take courage to give her mother an answer, when she asked us ‘if we could give her back her child.’ Our silence answered her too surely.

“She saw how we hung down our heads and answered not. Poor dame, it was not long after that she died. You would not know the ‘Travel-

ler's Rest' again; there is not a voice to be heard scarcely, but the bittern's (it may be) as its cry sounds from the little brook; and the garden—it is all run to waste now, and the walks are overrun with weeds and straggling shrubs;—and, oh, it is a long time since we had anything like a merry bout at skittles or bowls on the green, that used to be kept so smooth and fair when poor dear Gertrude used to look after things. All, all is sadly changed now.”

And here the rude narrative would break off, and the speaker be lost in sorrowful recollections of the happier past, so painfully now contrasted with the vacancy, gloom, and desertion of the present, when the forms he loved have parted, and have left the scenes where they moved cold as the grave that hides them!

So Mike told the tale; and many are the wild legends and chaunts of rustic verse to which it gave birth. You may yet hear the poor vagrant minstrels of the north chaunt aloud to the admiring Cumbrian swains the theme, “how the Beauty of Buttermere was wondrously lost to sight.”

And now night wraps in its calm dream the maze. The meer-depths—their moss and blossom-chequered banks—the hill brows above—the scattered cottages around, are not more harmonized in the silvery starlight that tints them far and wide, than they are hallowed at this hour by

the sad as chaste remembrances of their late lovely denizen.

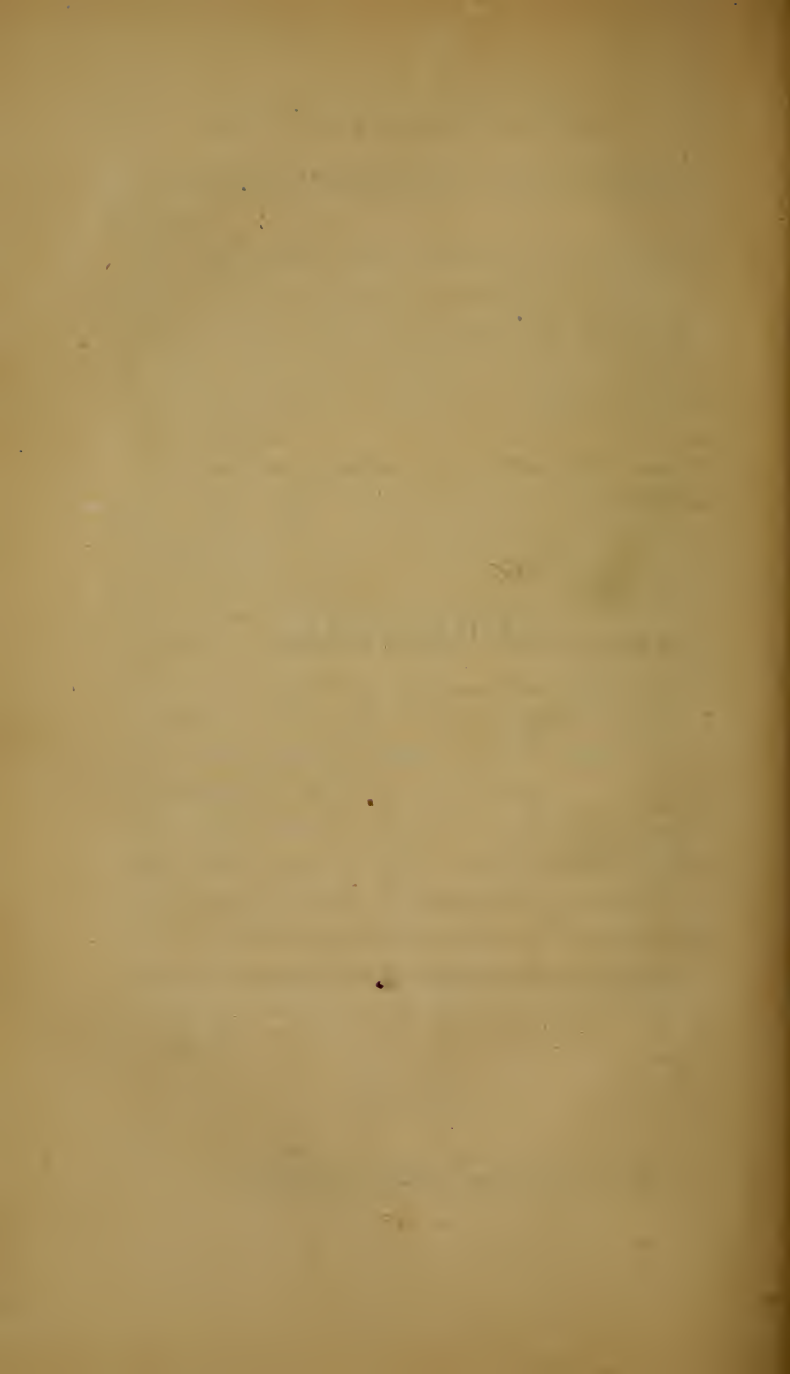
Her soft spirit is yet believed to hover round them, and few are the rude adventurers who are willing to extend their rambles after nightfall along the fatal steep that overhangs the meer, and beneath the shadows of which, it is supposed, she met her doom.

Ever, as the gorgeous glow of day has waned fainter over those waters, and the evening star emerges clearer from out the heavens,—ere yet the night dews have spread over moistened heather and moss, along the mountain's side,—the shepherd is seen hastening to fold his flock. Well pleased, he hies him to regain the confines of the hamlet, and cheer away, in the sounds of life and the ruddy glow of his fire-side, the shadows that have stolen over his breast, and chilled his rude fancies.

Full often has he sped his homeward track along that dim and sadly conscious steep, and mused on the fate of Gertrude; and, while darting fearful and side-long glances on the star-lit lake, he has seen, with the eyes of superstition, her soft vision floating over the waters in whose bosom she sleeps.

THE END.

APPENDIX.



No. I.

The following characteristic "dream" is subjoined here as illustrative of the argument in Chapter VII. of the first volume, although the story itself does not represent it as introduced until a later stage.

THE FAIRY FUTURE;

OR,

MOTHER EARTH IN A NEW DRESS:

*A "Psychological Thesis."**

AFTER the dismal sleep of untold time,

Earth rais'd her head, the waste immane to see
Of floods that gulf'd her puny shell of slime,

As one poor moment 'neath Eternity.

With dazzled ken she saw, 'mid joy and pain,

The beam, far slant, come glimm'ring o'er the deep;
And from long time, she knew the light again,

That rous'd once more her Inanition's sleep!

* The reader need scarcely be apprised that the peculiar term adopted here is characteristic of the person from whom the lines that follow are supposed to emanate. Our "Psychologist" proposes to illustrate the idea of a new world, or "earth-stratum," according to the Cuvierian system of its revolutions; in each successive phase of which it *has* exhibited, and *will* exhibit, (as is hence reasonable to suppose,) an improved nature, essence, and

And languid smil'd she, as its welcome shone
Up to her oozy bed, all cramp'd as yet,
But soon beneath the rescuing ray to own
A wider bound, with life-germs glowing set !
For, furtive dwindling the flood-mountains pass
That pent her heaving breast and stifled birth ;
And free, more free, from out the lighten'd mass
Respired she ! shook her dew-pearl'd locks in mirth !
Her revel was as slave's, the chain when shent
That long his pang hath vainly yearn'd to break !
Nor yet, alone, her watery bond was rent,
But lo ! she beam'd, new dight, as vernal snake !
And calling back what in old times she was,
Gaz'd she with wonder on her alter'd sheen ;
Admir'd her smiling bound's transfigur'd mass,
From all that late so dank and void had been.
For not alone was fairer garlanded
Her brow, with rarer plants, and stems, and flow'rs,
But, like a sea of light, her radiant bed
All silvery shone beneath those magic bow'rs !
Seem'd from that stern Submersion's doom was won
A Being of new purity ! a rarer
Essence throughout her frame, where life was none,
But promised to her joy an aspect fairer !

progeny. Our " Mother Earth," then, is presented in a new dress from the Cuvierian wardrobe. The earth is supposed, after every successive revolution, to be immersed in the waters, as observed in the opening of the following lines. It is needless to add that the peculiar style of our psychologist is sought to be conveyed in these lines, no less than the peculiarity of the fancy that forms their subject.

Nor baffled yet her hope : for as the ray
 Kindled with vital warmth that silvery strand,
 The foster'd seeds* of human, chaster clay,
 Bloom'd in bright births, as 'neath a fairy wand !
 Glad into being sprang a beauteous race,
 Man-like in form and guise, but sham'd by none
 Of those gross attributes that man debase—
 Bate his high vaunt, and boasted "heav'n-born" tone.
These seem'd divine indeed ! no gross appeal
 Strove through the Senses ! For what food lack'd
 they
 To whom the gales their sweetest banquet deal ?
 Such the rare structure of their purer clay !
 Organs were theirs, less complicate than ours,
 And lacking springs, that curious-plann'd howe'er,
 Yet lower man—the beast—that craves, devours,
 Or lust-inflamed, foregoes high Reason's care.
These knew distinction none of Sex : they seem'd
 A beauteous confraternity of Spirits,
 That in the rapture of their being dream'd
 Of nothing that or gross or vile inherits !
 If man be vile, his "structure" orders this ;
 Not so with this new race ! It seem'd but form'd
 For radiant perpetuity of bliss,
 By no one dark assault of Passion storm'd !

* The idea here seems to illustrate the old Oriental belief, that
 "human nature" was the birth of that saline *chemia* left by the
 receding of the waters at the creation of the world. Avicenna
 goes so far as to say that this is corroborated by the "saline" in
 our composition ; in fact, the Arabian sage describes men, accord-
 ing to this hypothesis, as plants sprung from "brine-seeds."

Its chaster dreams defaced no Sensual blot,
 No throb where mortal-madd'ning Furies call!
 Pure as those shapes, rejoic'd bright Being's lot!
 Crime with Remorse and Shame were banish'd all!
 The chaste seeds of the renovated Earth,
 In this New Revolution of her guise,
 Gave not, as erst, to light the monster birth
 Of savage beast or reptile progenies.
 As man was form'd not *now*—a beast of prey,
 No doom of grim destruction, as of life,
 Reign'd through distract Creation's havock'd way,
 Whose sov'reign law gloats aye on blood and strife!
 No brute-tribe ranged earth's mazes; yet she lack'd
 Nought that enhanc'd her cheerfulness and joy
 Happy in One blest race, she little wrack'd
 Her stores for aught to sully or destroy!
 And her sons walk'd in glad Security,
 Thro' paths, whose garland's rarest blossoming
 Was the choice flow'r "Contentment," fair as free,
 In chaste luxuriance joying wide to spring.
 Ambition's treach'rous wreath—it lur'd not *them*!
 BLISS was *their* World, amid those magic bow'rs
 Whose crystalline* translucence, spray and stem,
 Rose-tinted, blush'd 'neath sun of scatheless hours!
 Such, their bright Essence bloom'd—the dew exhal'd
 From their pure forms† recruiting them; and, fled
 Life's spark, in which their joy-lit day regal'd,
 New births sprang from them, as from seeds when shed.

* Supra. v. 25, 28.

† See Sale's Prelim. Discourse to the Koran.

The germ as well of man's as plant's creation

Bloom'd free from taint of contact gross ! . . I ne'er
Have sunn'd me in that golden dream's ovation,

But blam'd my Fancy that it mock'd so fair !—

But blam'd the restless, fond, ambitious Thought,

That, panting still for all—new, dread, or rare,—

Snatch'd the bright glimpse that but my sorrow wrought,

Hurl'd from that fairy heaven, to life that frown'd
so bare !

No. II.

THE three following stanzas, also characteristic, and illustrative of the speculations at pages 48 and 49 of Vol. II., have been subjoined here rather than in the text, in order not to break in upon the narrative.

MEASURE we Fame's fair scope aright?—Yon span
Illimitable—flood, vale, wood, and mound,
Successive stretch'd as far as ken may scan,—
In truth, as seeming, spread its mazes round
So vast? or magnify we, fond, the bound?
Turn to yon star-illumin'd galaxy
Of Worlds on Worlds. . . . Earth's ray, how wanes
it drown'd!

Thus, pictur'd vast, lures Fame's priz'd fallacy,
Though but a drop, 'mid streams that swell a boundless
Sea.

Vain doubts thy Pride? And wakes th' ambitious
blame

Impatient of high TRUTH? Whose dreaded knell
Shall whelm thy dream's fond whisper of a "Name"
Shrin'd in what blazonries unfading dwell

To grace th' " Hereafter's " illusory spell ?
Think ! echo though thy praise the Shadowy Coast,
Yet, whelm'd 'mid myriad rival boasts its swell—
Names voiced from Worlds on Worlds, Fame's count-
less host—

How sinks a shadow's shade, the once great-seeming
boast !

Yes, such their worth, Fame's future triumphs beam !
Such, here, their pigmy price, Earth's colours fly !
Is it for this—a speck, a shade, a dream,
Man throbs so ardent, toils so fretfully ?
Is it for this, Thought's struggle, Envy's sigh,
Too much infect him, sapping peace and bliss,
Marring blest bonds that twine the Social tie,
As on his vain emprise he bends, to miss
Life's sympathetic stores, and concourse bland—for
This !

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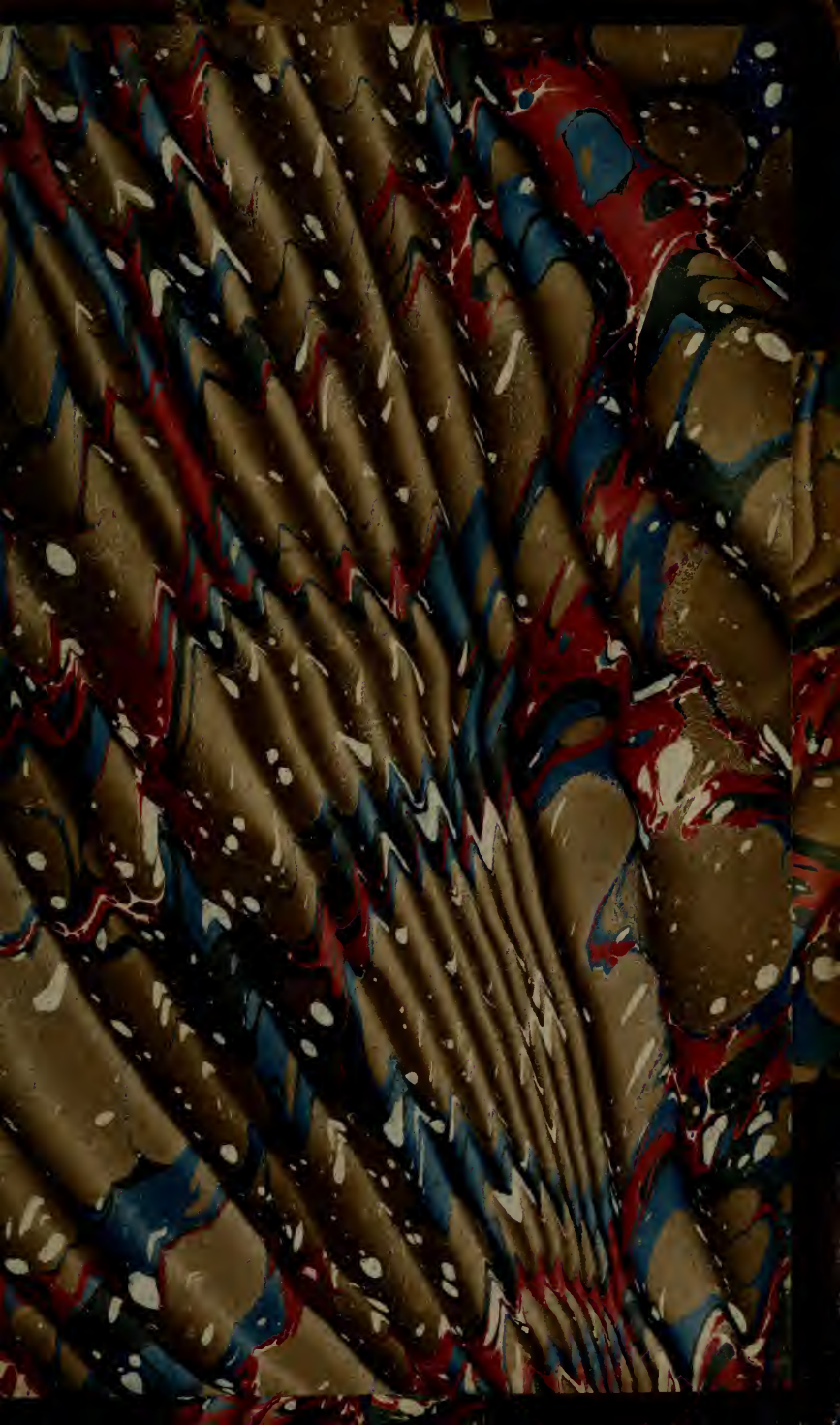
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